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THE ROCK PAINTINGS OF TASSILI

JEAN-DOMINIQUE LAJOUX

164 PLATES 23 IN COLOUR

THAMES AND HUDSON

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The rock paintings of Tassili

JEAN-DOMINIQUE LAJOUX

THE EXISTENCE of the rock paintings of the Tassili n'Ajjer has been known for some time—they were first discovered in 1909—but their true artistic worth is still largely unknown in spite of gouache copies and sketches already published. It remained to produce a faithful and accurate record of these monuments of a forgotten civilization by means of the camera. Here for the first time these remarkable achievements of early man are recorded photographically in colour and black-and-white, revealing the most striking and best preserved examples of this art as they really appear in their natural surroundings. The author follows a chronological sequence in his presentation of the pictures, with a few departures made intentionally to facilitate comparison of two or more works of different periods. Thus the book also fulfils a secondary purpose by interpreting, through the stages of their art, the life and beliefs of the ancient inhabitants of the Sahara. By means of these paintings and engravings we begin to sense the laws of a totally unknown universe and the features of a strange civilization.

This work could have been accomplished successfully only by a skilled photographer who also was an ethnologist, acquainted with the sites, and this book leaves no doubt of Jean-Dominique Lajoux's skill with the camera and knowledge of the subject. As Professor André Leroi-Gourhan says in his foreword, 'We know nothing of the beauties of the language in which the successive painters created their mythology, but the procession of colours and forms remains to lead us into the by-ways of a vanished philosophy. These forms have a remarkable beauty and personality of their own, and some of the works which the lens of J-D. Lajoux has captured to such advantage deserve a place of honour among the art treasures of the human race.'

164 plates, 23 in colour
25 drawings, 4 maps

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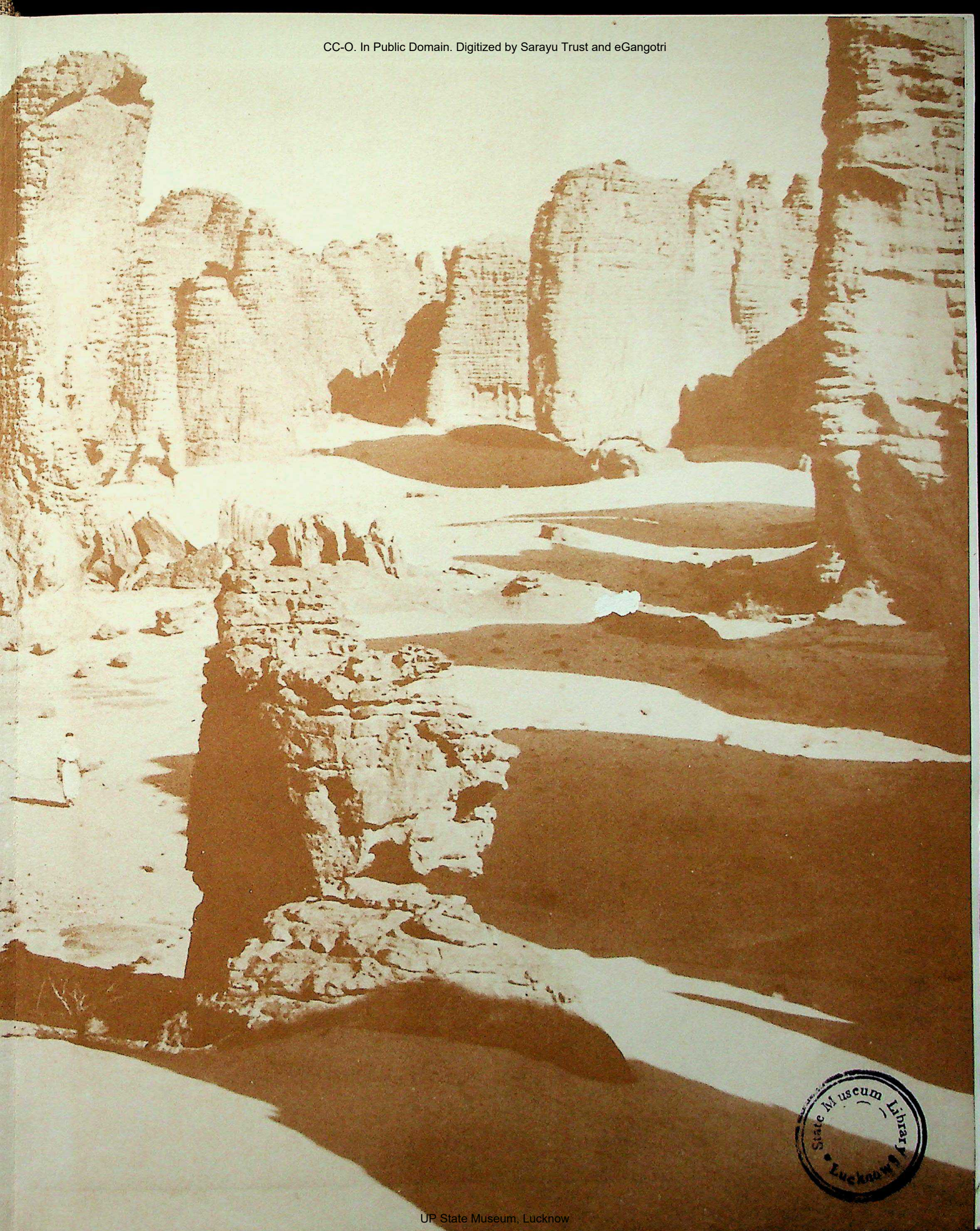

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The Rock Paintings of Tassili

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JEAN-DOMINIQUE LAJOUX

The Rock Paintings of Tassili

FOREWORD
by André Leroi-Gourhan

THE ART OF TASSILI
by Frank Elgar

THAMES AND HUDSON
LONDON

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To my wife

Translated by G. D. Liversage from the French *Merveilles du Tassili n'Ajjer*
This edition © Thames and Hudson London 1963
© Société Nouvelle des Editions du Chêne Paris 1962
Printed in Italy by Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche Bergamo

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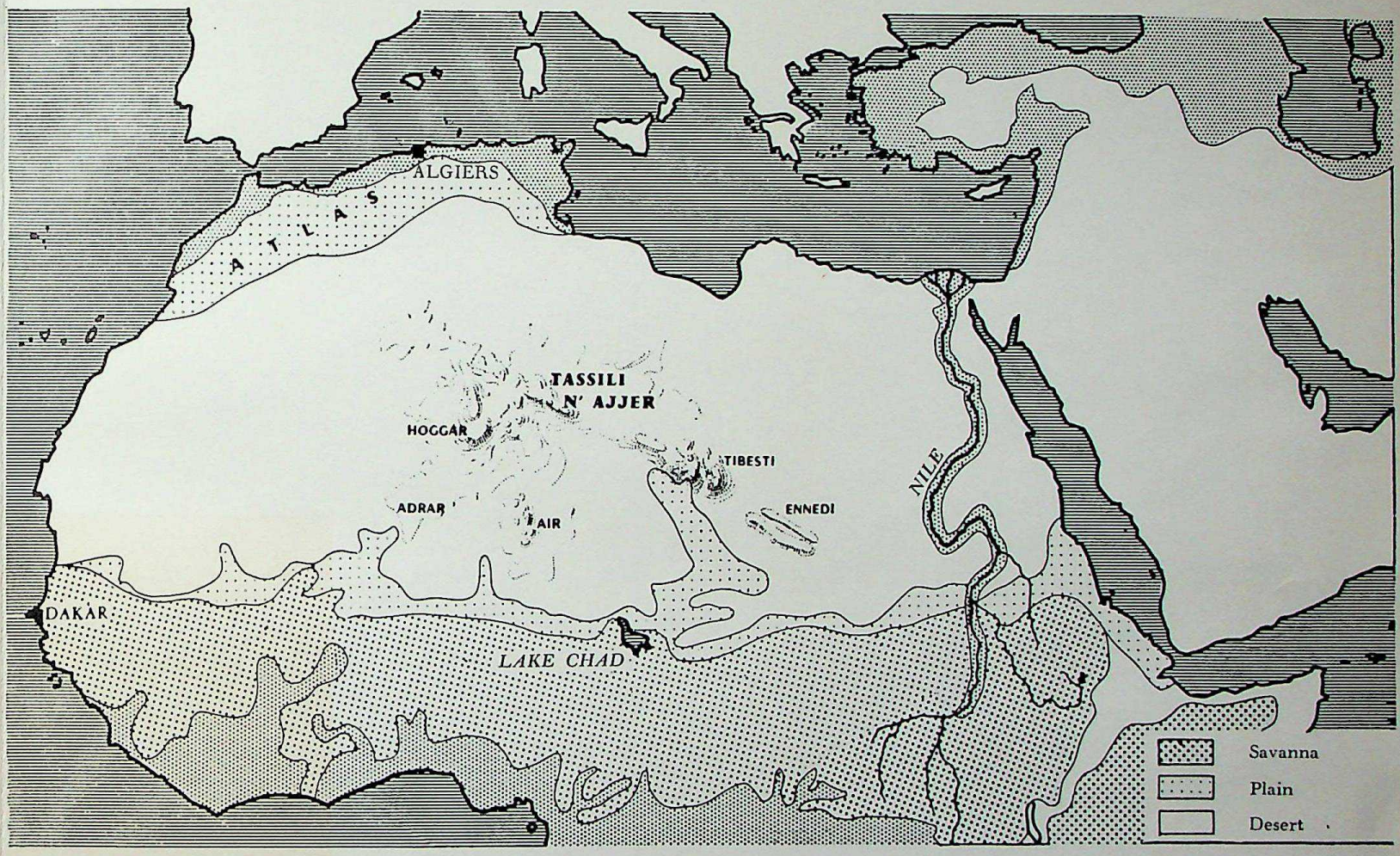

In Neolithic times the principal highland massifs were inhabited regions in the midst of what is now desert. The majority of them contain sites with prehistoric paintings, and of these the Tassili is, at present, the richest and most important. See the maps of the painted sites on pp. 199-202.

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FOREWORD

We are indebted to the work of Henri Lhote for having made the general public aware of the existence of Saharan art; we are indebted to J.-D. Lajoux for bringing us into touch with its veritable artistic substance. However faithful drawings or water-colour copies may be, they cannot give us the intimate flavour of the original, especially in the case of rock paintings; and if one wishes to render due honour to patiently assembled documentation of the successive teams of copyists whom Lhote led in the Tassili for fifteen years, one should also hail that member of his teams who placed his great photographic talent at the service of direct vision of the Tassilian works of art. The quality attained by photographic emulsions and graphic reproduction now makes it possible to bring the pictures from the cliff face directly before the reader, define the superpositions, and make even the invisible appear to the eye.

The chronology of these Saharan works is still very uncertain and J.-D. Lajoux has started out from the four accepted periods — that of the white figures, that of the cattle herders, the period of the horse, and the period of the camel. He has been wise enough to insist that even if this succession is established, one does not know precisely how the different periods were linked together nor to what exact intervals of time they correspond. This ignorance will perhaps shock the reader less if we remind him that it has taken more than half a century and many excavations to date with any degree of precision the decorated caves of France and Spain, and that they are still, in certain cases, the object of discussion. The frescoes of Tassili come to us, without other archaeological context, as the proof that a Sahara covered by savanna was inhabited from the remotest prehistory until the dawn of modern times. Their content is our only guide; its witness is laconic but coherent. The paintings dominated by white, found in superposition under the paintings

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dominated by ochre, show many wild animals and oxen; the ochre paintings show enormous numbers of oxen and wild animals; they pass into the paintings of harnessed horses; the camels close the procession with recent inscriptions. The scant chronological evidence available about the Tassilian works suggests that they came into being between the appearance of the first cattle herders and the present day. It would for the moment be completely illusory to assign a precise date to the domestication of cattle at Tassili. One may only suppose that in 4000 B.C. such cattle would hardly have penetrated as far as the Sahara and that in 2000 B.C. they must already have been there. The progressive dessication of the Saharan savanna is a fairly recent phenomenon, and until the Roman period the conditions necessary for cattle raising obtained around the highlands. Excluding the possibility of still older pictures which remain to be found, Tassilian art can thus be presumed to be the work of cattle herders belonging to the same great current of pastoral civilization to which the Peuls, Nilotes, or Bantu of the present day belong. As with these, hunting played an important role.

The problem of Egyptian influences presents itself but can hardly as yet be solved. It is certain that Egypt belonged as the most dynamic element to this wide-reaching civilization of cattle herders, whose successive waves spread as far as West and South Africa; but if one may draw a comparison from protohistoric Europe, the direct influence of archaic Greece was not felt by the Bronze Age populations of Scandinavia – there were only a number of general similarities in technical and economic traits which otherwise gave free play to the individuality of each group. We have as yet no proof that the Egyptians ever came to Tassili; on the other hand it is not impossible to detect in some of the Tassilian works the influence of people who were neighbours of the neighbours of the Egyptians, for one would normally regard the herdsmen of Tassili as living at the margin of an aureole of civilization whose centre touched the Mediterranean. Tassilian art is, nevertheless, more than anything, African. Leaving out of account the physical type of the majority of the actors, who belong plainly to the black race, features of head-dress, finery, and clothing constantly recall present-day peoples from south of the Sahara. These recollections should not lead us to hasty comparisons with one or another modern ethnic group, but they compel us to regard at least a proportion of the Tassilian works as among the delights of Melano-African art.

Finally, the meaning of the works is unknown and J.-D. Lajoux is wisely reticent here. It gets one nowhere to maintain that this art is 'magico-religious'. They all are! They all respond to the deepest needs of mankind

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afflicted by the mystery of the death and the reproduction of game and livestock — paleolithic art as much as the art of the Indians or the plaster statue of some little local saint who protects the calves of our countryside. It is art, simply, and, we may say, therefore religious; for hardly any other art is known at the level of primitive populations. What exactly is its content? To answer this it would be necessary to have studied it in depth; but its discovery is still exceedingly recent, and up to the present no complete group has been published among the thousands of figures. To say what god or gods the painters invoked, what myths they related in their paintings will probably for ever remain impossible; unless, since this is a relatively recent art, one manages to find them in the reflected light of the written tradition of the eastern Mediterranean or in present-day African mythologies. Even were every link lost with past and present, it would still be possible to grasp their main lines from a complete inventory of all the groups and the study of the association of the elements of which they are composed. Such a study would provide the framework of their religious thought, a skeleton which would enable us to recognize themes shared by all men — the couple, the mother with child, the combat, hunger expressed through the medium of game and livestock. However banal the result might be, it would no doubt enable us to grasp an evolution in the themes, and in the roles of each of the actors; finally, it would permit comparison between Tassilian religious painting and the religions whose works are preserved in Europe, such as Franco-Cantabrian cave art, to which Altamira and Lascaux belong, or the group of the Spanish Levant, which, at first sight, considerably resembles the art of the Sahara. One would be able to assign Tassilian art its place among the innumerable works which cover the rest of the African savanna and compare it with the thousands of engravings which appeared from Arabia to Norway between the Neolithic and the Iron Ages, i.e. at the same time as Tassilian art.

But art has always two aspects — that of the science which endeavours to find its meaning, to make it the nourishment of history or religious psychology; and that of aesthetic feeling. We know nothing of the beauties of the language in which the successive painters created their mythology, but the procession of colours and forms remains, to lead us capriciously into the byways of a vanished philosophy. These forms have a remarkable beauty and personality of their own, and some of the works which the lens of J.-D. Lajoux has captured to such advantage, deserve a place of honour among the art treasures of the human race.

ANDRE LEROI-GOURHAN

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INTRODUCTION

Several thousand years have rolled by since the magnificent Upper Palaeolithic Age which has left us works of art of incomparable grandeur.

The Mesolithic which followed it seems to have plunged Europe into a lethargic slumber; but, thanks to exceptionally favourable climatic conditions at certain privileged points of the globe, a revolution of the techno-economic system was about to upset the traditions of the human societies who had lived so far simply on the products of hunting, fishing, and gathering.

It took five hundred thousand years of technical development for the full development of stone tools. A few centuries were sufficient to give birth to agricultural civilization, of which our own is merely a recent prolongation.

Eight thousand years before the Christian era, Man discovered the principles of agriculture and stock raising; rapidly, he perfected his new techniques, became sedentary, made new discoveries and new inventions.

Metallurgy and ceramics derive from Man's mastery over fire. They brought into existence the 'smith', society's first specialist.

By the fourth millennium, corn had become the basic food of the people. Its abundance and suitability for storage resulted in a significant increase of population. The agriculturists grouped themselves together in village — 'cities' — and 'social classes' were introduced. Cultures formed and gave proof of their diversity. 'Idols', their faces half obliterated by time, testify to the artistic sensibility of the peoples who conceived them. The new civilizations carved their memorials on the living rock while tribes belonging to the archaic tradition still fashioned weapons of stone. In order to be able to face adversaries who worked bronze or copper, and in order to combat the technical gulf which separated them from the new civilization, these primitive peoples achieved remarkable technical feats; they succeeded in making weapons whose forms, and sometimes colours, resembled those of the metal weapons.

Thus a new epoch was born — the Neolithic era, the age of agriculture. It was also in Neolithic times that the means of transport appeared.

By land and by sea, the new civilization propagated itself. Its influence was felt by the inhabitants of a vast country — the Sahara.

Today ruled by drought, this landscape gnawed by the blazing sun was, in prehistoric times, covered with vegetation and inhabited by busy

TAMRIT
A typical Tassilian landscape.

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human beings who have left the traces of their existence behind them. In 1931 Count Bégouen wrote –

'The presence over the entire surface of the desert of various kinds of worked flint proves prolonged occupation. This is one of the things which most strikes the traveller in these regions...'

Indeed, over almost the entire area of the Sahara the debris of stone industries of every age is, literally, heaped upon the ground.

If Man had not by abandoning these objects left us proof of his existence, we would not have believed that he could have lived in a land now so inimical to life. His trace survives not only in the profusion of the artifacts he has left us, but also in his 'idols'.

The latter constitute the most striking ensemble of rock engravings and paintings found anywhere in the world. Many a rock protruding from the sand bears its traces; many a cliff shelter reflects the creative work of the hand of Man in engraved or painted figures whose meaning is still shrouded in mystery. In the massifs of Hoggar and Ennedi, of Adrar or Tassili, everywhere, hidden in the penumbra of the overhanging cliffs, they seem to meditate in the silence which surrounds them and the isolation in which they endure.

The study of fossil pollen grains has revealed to us quite recently that a great many plants which have now disappeared used to shade a fertile soil with their foliage. The holm oak, the cypress, the olive, the alder, the lime, were silhouetted against a more clement sky. Samples taken in the earth of Tassili, like those from the Hoggar and the Aïr, show upon analysis the presence of this vegetation. It has been possible to date certain pollen samples: 3250 and 2850 B.C. for those of Tassili n'Ajjer, which were, moreover, associated with a few cattle bones. The Tassili pollen showed the presence of the above-mentioned trees. The same has been found in the Tefedest, and at Meniet in the Hoggar, where a deposit dated to 3450 B.C. also contained bones of *Bos ibericus*, *Bubalus antiquus*, and various lizards and fish. Finally, on the Hoggar, in the massif of Taessa, at an altitude of 2,000 metres, a deposit of guano has allowed the dating of the end of the humid period of the central Sahara (2700 B.C.). Guano decays with dampness and its good state of preservation here proves that it accumulated while regions at this height must have been undergoing dessication.

In the light of these studies it can be seen clearly that for some

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thousands of years before the Christian era a Mediterranean vegetation covered all the mountainous areas of the central Sahara. The climate of these regions must have been comparable to that of the present-day Saharan Atlas.

Those who have carried out research in pollen analysis have laid stress upon the errors that would arise from basing climatic determinations on the fossil fauna (rhinoceros, elephant...) or, one may add, the rock paintings. The capability of animals for adaptation to environment far exceeds that of plants. This is now a well-established fact. In reality it is Man who, in historical times, has contributed most to the destruction of the larger mammals of northern Africa. It is Man who is still destroying the survivors of this fauna, and the last of the moufflons, gazelle, oryx, and other antelope are seriously threatened.

It is likely that regions of low altitude were the first to feel the change of climate, that is to say a progressive drying-up of the land. First, following the rhythm of their seasonal migrations the inhabitants were forced to abandon the low-level dry areas in favour of the damper high areas; then, as the plain became poorer they had to confine themselves to the hills and to areas around the water sources.

Bit by bit a regrouping took place among the ancient Saharan populations, involving a mingling of different societies belonging to a common cultural stem. Techno-economic exchanges between these populations were facilitated, giving rise to changes in social and religious structure and having repercussions on artistic expression.

The geographic situation of the plateau of Tassili n'Ajjer may have made it a good place for the regrouping of diverse peoples coming from north and south. Gradually these populations were to decline in number until the balance was restored between the natural resources, constantly being diminished by dessication, and the number of inhabitants to be fed. The technical superiority of the peoples arrived from the north-east and in contact with the great civilization which was spreading out from the Middle East, guaranteed them an immunity that the autochthonous populations and those that had come from the south lacked. Likewise the Hoggar was to witness the Touareg Berbers' superiority in adapting themselves to the climate.

The black herdsmen were nevertheless to survive in Ennedi and the borders of the Sudan; in West Africa the Peuls were the descendants

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of the ancient populations of the Saharan Sud. The populations who became sedentary around the water supplies had to adopt agriculture. Only this technique allowed them to get anything out of the land which Nature parsimoniously dispensed to them.

Subsequently this land has become the 'oasis'.

Archaeology has shown that the Sahara was always inhabited. The ancient peoples who lived there presented, in all likelihood, a certain cultural homogeneity, not only in their level of technique, as shown by their equipment, but also in their modes of expression, of which rock art – both engravings and paintings – is a striking example.

An art was born at Tassili – an art with no outside source. The external influences which some believe they can discern in Tassilian art, are due simply to a phenomenon known as 'convergence', determined by the genetic structure of the sap which quickened it. Drawing its nourishment from the same roots, it carried within it the same genes that elsewhere engendered Egyptian and black African art. Right from their genesis, the cultures and the civilizations that gave expression to them developed in their own directions, each according to its own rhythm, and found by degrees their own needs and their own nature. Every now and again a common trait would appear simultaneously in more than one of these civilizations, bringing to mind some influence coming perhaps from the East. At present it is impossible to assert the priority of any one of these cultures over the others, and it is wiser to wait until a number of archaeological discoveries have given precise dates, before describing the interplay of reciprocal influences, if any such existed.

The evolution of a civilization is not regulated exclusively by influences derived from contact with other neighbouring civilizations, but also, and to a higher degree, by internal conditions. The evolution of a civilization is, moreover, also the evolution of its forms of expression. Thus in Egypt local climatic conditions allowed the dynasties to enter upon their amazing ascendances; the Nile provided the land with fertile silt and with water such as the skies were then denying the Sahara.

In Tassili n'Ajjer rock art evolved slowly; it was climatic events that were to halt its development. The evolutions of the different styles followed a curve whose peak is found at the same period as the first

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signs of dessication, say between approximately 3000 and 2500 B.C. The paintings seem above all to be striving after magic and symbolic potency; they are the expressions of a state of sensibility which shows itself in a style of painting with rough monumental outlines, imbued with the mystery of the ritual it obeys. Later, the mastery acquired over his hand led the painter on to a more precise, a more natural mode. What he lost in magical potency he gained in naturalistic representation. The highest point was reached at the time when the horse appeared in the artistic works. Finally, a degeneration of the stylistic conventions which characterized this art set in through the weakening of the creative imagination. A schematization of design was the result. Representation came closer to the symbol. Writing, the new instrument of domination, of progress, of power, gave purpose to the symbol, and was henceforth to ensure the authority of gods and men alike.

On the Tassili, the Berbers, deeply imbued with the autochthonous customs of the ancient Sahara, were the heirs to this artistic evolution. With the call of Islam, which about 700 B.C. introduced the Arabic language and alphabet, all this magnificent past fell into obscurity and oblivion. Only certain magic signs, whose original meaning the Touaregs have now lost, live on in the characters of the Tifinar alphabet.

Nevertheless, the magic meaning of these symbols is perhaps not totally forgotten. It appears, despite inevitable changes, in the brands with which the Peul herdsmen mark their animals. 'Koumen', the initiation text of the Peul, is the recitation of a mythical journey which the herdsman must make in order to attain to the ultimate wisdom. The ox appears as the mythological divinity of a complex ritual whose essential purpose is to perpetuate the human and animal species.

It is for their own protection that the animals are branded after their birth at a period determined by the oracle, or, among other tribes of Nigeria and the Cameroons, have their ears notched. These brands, with their symbolic purpose, of which fourteen are known, strangely resemble certain ancient signs and the marks of the rock paintings.

Was this logical evolution or simple coincidence? Perhaps it is an indication of the endurance of religious ideas and their expression through time and space in the face of a variety of other influences.

The power of these primitive beliefs, inherited from the ancient Saharan reservoir, is still felt among the peoples of the Sahara.

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In the same way in the Tassilian shelters of Tin Tékelt and Ouan Assahor the Touaregs still smear the ancient engravings, deep and polished by human feet, with butter and goat milk.

It was techniques rather than men which moved around, and it was the coming of the means of transport that freed primitive man, whoever he may have been, from the soil to which he was tied. Previously he had circulated in a land whose every secret and smallest variation was known to him. According to his needs and his potentialities, he drew upon all the resources which encompassed him. In his own country he was reminded of his myths and legends by such and such a mountain, tree, or rock. His dead ancestors still inhabited the place; he must not leave them, he had no wish to go from them. He was unable to leave his soil to go to what he believed was the 'end of the world' in search of adventure.

Thus as he attached his Olympian universe to the sides of the mountains, feeling the earth dissolve under his feet, the ancient inhabitant of the Sahara clung desperately to his own country, until, with torn nails, he had to loosen his grasp and fall back into the void from which he had emerged.

JEAN-DOMINIQUE LAJOUX

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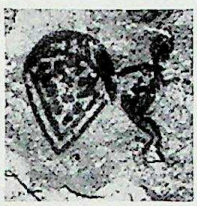
THE ART OF TASSILI

Since it falls to my lot to discuss the manner in which the rock engravings and paintings of Tassili were executed, to attempt to define their inspiration and the means employed to give this inspiration visible expression, it is only fitting that I should begin by confessing my doubts and hesitations. The men of the Sahara knew nothing of aesthetics, the scientific study of beauty. Art – or rather the evaluation of art – had no meaning for them. To put it another way, they created art without knowing it, the figures they traced on the rocks having for them a *magical* effect – what we today would prefer to call 'practical' or 'functional'. At any rate this prefatory remark applies to the oldest representations, which were incontestably nourished by mythological or religious sentiment. Look, for example, at the enigmatic figures and indecipherable symbols of pages 56, 59, ff.[1], round-headed monsters set upon massive legs, masked sorcerers with bodies tattooed with various ornaments. Or look again at the farandole of gnomes, borne in frenzied rhythm the whole length of a rock shelter to whose natural architecture they admirably adapt themselves (pp. 72 and 73)[2]. These beings, who one might think were engendered by the imagination of some visionary, belonged in all probability to a sacred repertory, to an iconography whose meaning has now escaped us, but whose vigour and power, however summarily they may be drawn, reverberates in our mind.



1

2

It is hard also to explain the presence on the precipices of Tassili of signs already seen in the rock paintings of the Atlas, the Fezzan, of Libya, even of the Spanish Levant – meanders, circles, crescents, lines of dots, drawings of the human hand. The relationship of naturalistic Saharan art with that of the Spanish Levant, as with other surviving rock art of the black continent, raises a problem which still awaits solution. One constantly encounters, in regions remote from one another and different in their style of drawing, almost identical subjects – ceremonies, incantations, scenes of war, hunting, or daily life – all drawn in a dynamic narrative fashion. Nearly everywhere running archers, dancing women, representations of wild or domestic animals appear at the entrances of caves and rock shelters, all executed with an increasing tendency to schematization. Here and there common stylistic conventions are encountered – buffaloes, oxen, or antelope shown in profile with their horns end on; the seated men and women with open arms of pages 124 and 125[3] were already known from the rocks of the Fezzan; the composition with overlapping figures (pp. 131, 160, 163) repeats that of the paintings

3

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of Nubia, Hierakonpolis, Southern Rhodesia, and eastern Spain. No doubt these similarities derive from a common tradition.

4

It seems, indeed, that the various rupestral arts of Africa were subject to identical laws of evolution. The draughtsman or painter expressed his magico-religious intentions first of all by means of elementary shapes drawn with a heavy laconic line (pp. 47, 49, 54, 60, 62, 68), where the human or animal form plainly betrays his scorn for realism[4]. Later he felt the need to display his talent and give an account of what he saw. This naturalistic phase was followed by a tendency to simplification and abstraction. Departing from straightforward representation, the artist reduced his forms to mere allusions, to schemas, to signs (pp. 191, 193, 194). For reality as perceived by the senses he substituted a new reality of ideas. When society had arrived at a sufficient level of organization and stability, the ritual act of the prehistoric artist was superseded by the commemoration of events and hence by pictographic writing. As in western Europe, themes changed with the development of social conditions. The man given to the practice of sorcery was succeeded by the warrior, the hunter, the herdsman, the stock breeder, by the man busy with family and community life. The artist, who at first was interested in crude elementary form (pp. 49, 50, 57) came to concern himself with gesture, posture, movement, the figure in action (pp. 99, 101, 138, 156, 162, 167)[5]. The evolution also shows in the artist's methods; the outline which rigidly enclosed the mass grew finer, disappeared, and gave place to the unedged coloured surface, to the area of paint, so that men and animals appeared in Chinese shadows against the background of the rock.

5

6

Now that we have called attention to these analogies, it is only proper that we should stress how individual was the rupestral art of the central Sahara and how characteristic. The earliest illustrations in this book show that Man in the archaic period preferred to use white, either exclusively (pp. 58, 77), or in combination with purple ochre or yellow. In the latter case, sometimes a highlighted form is enclosed by a dark outline (pp. 59, 60, 63)[6], sometimes the outline is white while the form is dark (pp. 79, 80)[7]. The painter discovered, in the contrast of the two shades, effects which surprise us by their pictorial value. Look for example, at the masked figures of pages 70, 71, 82. We share the Abbé Breuil's amazement at the famous 'White Lady' found at Brandeberg among the rock paintings of the Bushmen. How can we adequately express our

7

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admiration of the masterpiece reproduced on page 81, of this lavishly decorated horned dancer whose body is painted green and spangled with white spots, no doubt indicating scarifications? From her arms and waist hangs a tissue of white fibres which accentuates her movement. Observing the arrangement of her flexed legs, the graceful undulation of her arms and the counter-curve of the horns, the harmony of the whole, we know that we are in the presence of a consummate art. Nothing is lacking; there is perfect elegance of line, balance of proportions, graphic and coloured rhythm; even the composition is brimful of intelligence. It is hard to believe that six thousand years before Matisse, anyone was able to execute so exquisite a painting. Note the small extra figures which surround the dancer.

The decorated rocks of Tassili present us with many more astounding achievements. Consider the men and women seated abandonedly on pages 124 ff. Far from diminishing their naturalness, their exaggerations of shape emphasize it. There is nothing purposeless, nothing superfluous in these stirring silhouettes. One can find many others in an endless variety of attitudes – figures abandoning themselves to the joys of the dance or of conversation, busy watching their herds, milking cows, engaged in their domestic occupations or taking part in tribal festivals, initiation ceremonies, or rites incomprehensible to us. Camp life inspired scenes of rare charm – a woman dragging her reluctant offspring by the hand (p. 135), the group shown on page 134 where one sees, inside a hut, an individual lying on his back with a child; on a table can be seen his bow, on the floor a jar and several other containers. To make the composition convincing, the hut and its contents are represented by a simple outline of red ochre, while the two women with their youngsters outside it are represented in full colour. On the other hand the extraordinary painting of pages 128-129[8] presents an insoluble enigma. Various mystical shapes are arranged around the outside of a circle. In the circle on the right, which here obviously represents the interior of a hut, two figures are seated. The diagrammatic shapes which ray out from the central circle appear to gyrate rapidly, while the adjacent animal and human forms join in the movement.

8

The figures of pages 140, 141, 150, with their crested or pear-shaped head-gear, are probably busy with some cult or ritual. Pages 152 ff. make us spectators at scenes of war and the hunt which strike us by their truthfulness. Never has a painter of historic times expressed the pursuit

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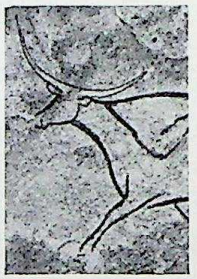
of the quarry and the frenzy of combat (?) with such savage passion, or the daring of the hunter and warrior (?) with the help of an artistic shorthand so adequate and persuasive. From pages 154 to 169 we have a cinematic procession of episodes of this kind – archers who advance in Indian file, begin to run and, one might say, to fly, so great is the ardour which carries them up and on...[9-10]. Implement in hand, the artist engages with all his spirit and all his flesh in the struggle. He sees not only with the eyes of the body but with those of the spirit; therefore it is not surprising that he employs a method of drawing that is at once free and exact, lengthening out of proportion the arms and even more the legs of his men, which allows him to indicate the violence of the action and at the same time to show spatial perspective. It was in more or less the same manner that in 1920 Picasso, in order to give the illusion of depth, deliberately and emphatically elongated the lower limbs of his *Baigneuses sur la Plage*.

9

10

Animal drawing attained at Tassili a fullness, an energy, an incisiveness, and a technical mastery that one seldom finds elsewhere on the African continent. One admires the firm design of page 101[11], and of page 106 where the artist amused himself by representing two bovids with a single body; or the innumerable herds which graze placidly or trot in front of the herdsman whose shouts can almost be heard. Their shapes and the colours of their hides are rendered with an economy which in no way detracts from their realism. The painter was at pains to reproduce the pattern and subtlety of their marking. The neck, the chest, the joints, the articulation of the limbs, are studied with an incredible manual assurance. The same applies to the buffaloes, moufflons, antelopes, giraffes, hippopotami, rhinoceros, ostriches; even insects are figured on the rock with an enchanting variety of expression. Sometimes the animal is represented in outline, sometimes solid, sometimes wholly by means of bold strokes of colour (p. 58) or spots (p. 96)[12]. It even happened that animals whose stupidity or drollness invited ridicule inspired the ancient Saharan to caricature (the ostriches on p. 97).



11

However surprising it may seem, the artist of Tassili tried by the interplay of lines and forms alone to give volume to his forms. Examine the antelope of pages 91 and 92, the giraffe of page 96, the cattle of pages 110 and 115. He is equally mindful of space, which he obtained by an ingenious segregation of planes. As animals are generally represented in profile, the legs furthest from the spectator are, as should be, shorter

12

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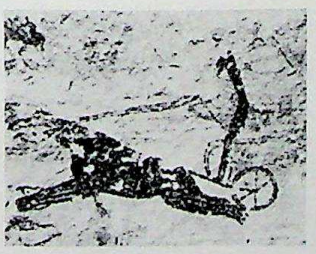
or less strongly coloured than the others. It is common for the animal to turn its head slightly and the horns are seen frontally. When cattle are shown in herds, they overlap one another in depth, the position of each in relation to the next being emphasized by contrasts of colour, as on page 107, with its alternating ochres, browns, blues, greys, and violets.

When the artist rendered wild animals, his inspiration led him to excel himself, no doubt because many difficulties had to be overcome before he could fix the image of the hippopotamus, which dives into the water at the slightest noise, the elephant, which senses the presence of Man at a great distance, the ostrich or the antelope whose speeds surpass that of the galloping horse. The fleet-footed antelopes are reproduced, nevertheless, with a fidelity to which the camera lens cannot attain. for the hand which engraved, drew, or painted, was able, by exaggerating a feature here, suppressing or simplifying a shape there, to convey the sharp feeling of panic fear. Watch the graceful animals skip, gallop, or fly like the arrow whose form they have taken! See how felicitously the giraffe (?) on page 96 is represented with the use only of a few lines and an assortment of spots. A view from above shows us its back, with the body in three-quarter, the head in full profile, securely fixed on the trapeze formed by its hooves, as though the anonymous author of this fine work had wished to show the measure of his genius by choosing the most difficult solution (cf. also pp. 180, 181)[13]. Later, when the peoples of the Sahara were familiar with the horse and the wheel, the rocks became covered with scenes showing charioteers driving chariots harnessed to nimble steeds[14]. With the appearance of the camel at the beginning of our era, decadence set in (p. 188 ff.). Execution became clumsy, confused, and rather heavy. The creative sap seems to have spoiled at the same time as the country dried up and the springs gave way to the sands. The nomad replaced the sedentary herdsman, abstraction was substituted for the naturalism which produced the wonderful design, the grandiose polychrome paintings, the powerful compositions in depth, the astonishingly living pictures of which this book gives us a telling glimpse. Here everything conspires for our pleasure – certainty and purity of line, balance of proportion and colours, the arrangement, sometimes exuberant, sometimes majestic, of the forms, the beauty of men and animals, shown with such a knowledge of their anatomy, reflexes, vital functions as can only have been acquired by giving full

13



14

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play to feeling, and been fostered by the love which binds all creatures together in a grand fraternity. But naturalism is not the servile imitator of reality. The liveliest feelings and the most fluent imagination constantly intervene to give the clearest and most meaningful interpretation to the phenomena of nature.

I have said that the artist of Tassili was not an artist; that he had no conception of what we call the aesthetic. One should think rather of the painted passages and shelters as holy places; of the mesolithic or neolithic iconographer as assuring the position of his clan in this world and its destiny in the next, as preparing in the men and animals he drew the propitiatory rite of which both have need when they live together. As he did this he felt himself irresistibly drawn to express his own personality in his products, to externalize his own sentiments and motives. In order to translate into visual form his own theory of creation, he found a most telling and transparent mode of the expression, and one in conformity to a high degree with the law of balance. That is why, if the social and religious significance of these paintings evades us, it is enough for us to enjoy their enchanting richness and to rediscover through them the being of flesh and bone that we are.

FRANK ELGAR

THE CAMEL TRACK OF DJANET-RHAT, IN THE AKBA (COL) OF TAFELALET

View taken in the second akba – facing a cliff 300 to 350 m. high. The two donkeys driven by a Targui are carrying the equipment used in photographing the paintings.

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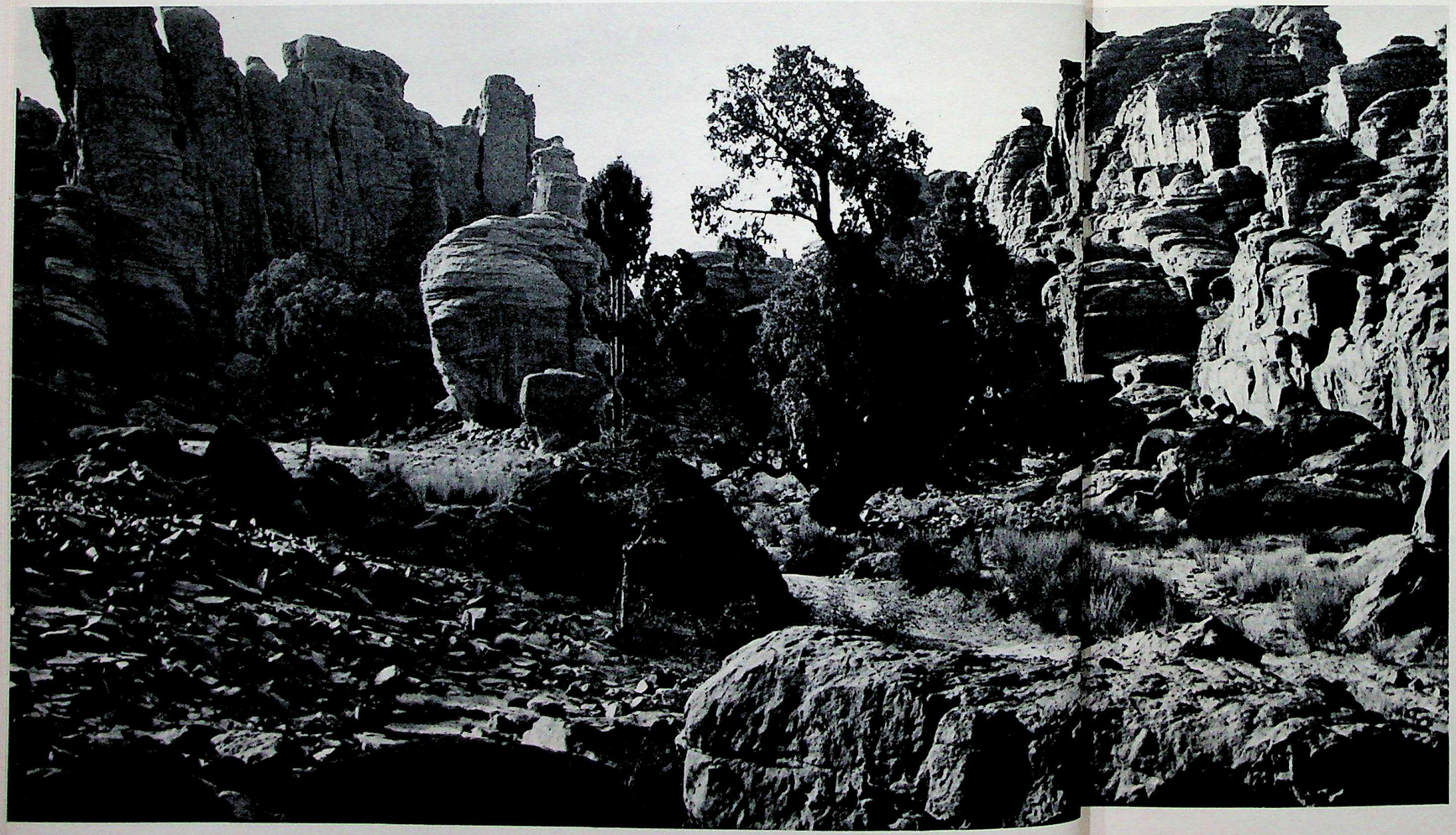
A civilization is a phenomenon and it is through the monuments it leaves behind that we evaluate its qualities and greatness. Its individuality is proportionate to the depth, vividness, and duration of the impression it makes upon us.

ELIE FAURE



THE CYPRESSES OF THE WADI TAMRIT

Along with the wild olive (*Olea laperrini*), the cypress (*Cupressus dupreziana*) is the only survivor of the humid period (Mediterranean climate) of the central Sahara. About one hundred and fifty of these cypresses survive on the Tassili. They are several centuries old and the seeds which fall on the ground no longer germinate.

A vast plateau in the eastern part of the central Sahara, about 1,500 kilometres from the Mediterranean coast of North Africa, the Tassili n'Ajjer with its sandstone uplands encircles the crystalline massif of the Hoggar mountains. Over the vast area of this plateau, bounded on the south by an escarpment 500 to 700 metres high, are scattered here and there strange groups of rocks to which Nature has given the oddest shapes, and which erosion has tortured still further. The sight of these forests of rock cannot fail to arouse, even in the hardened traveller, an emotion in which hallucination is mingled with wonder and tragedy with enchantment. Out of these rocks which rise, bristle, sprawl, swell, and jostle one another into chaotic alignments, rise a thousand phantasmagoria – cathedrals, legendary castles, baroque palaces, dead cities, gigantic sanctuaries, shipwrecks, antediluvian monsters with wrinkled hides; in short, a host of suggested shapes, brute forms in unbounded space, visited only by the wind. Nevertheless, in spite of their fear of the 'Djinns', malignant spirits haunting these desolate places, the Touareg women follow their goats hither in search of a few tufts of grass, and hunters sometimes venture for moufflon.

To the Touaregs the regs, expanses of loose dark-coloured slabs which surround each rock massif like fields around a village, are more attractive and less sinister than these mysterious groups of rocks, whose eroded bases seem able to support them only with the help of the powers of darkness.

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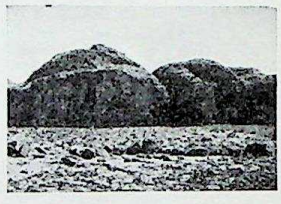
The monumental forms of these high geological formations inspire a feeling of uneasiness, a fear sometimes akin to awe. For primitive peoples, strangeness is the outward sign of a supernatural presence. It is therefore easy to believe that people could have had their places of worship or initiation in these vaulted passages, in the heart of these labyrinths. Thus today we can still find the 'idols' of the ancient peoples which inhabited these regions. There are, in particular, the strange figures of masked men and the mysterious symbols decorating the walls of a number of sanctuary-like shelters, especially rocks with wide concave surfaces, hidden in the deepest and darkest corners. Together with shelters of similar form, standing alone on the edge of the wadis*, they compose the first class of painted rock shelter to be found on the Tassili. The oldest paintings are generally on the walls of these 'sanctuary rocks'.

A second type of shelter*, found especially in the more open parts of the wildernesses of stone, have paintings in a more naturalistic style, depicting herdsmen and cattle. These shelters always have low walls of various sized stones, which bar the passages leading to the paintings or enclose a semi-circular area at their foot. These walls, which stand out conspicuously on the terrain, help one to find new painted sites. They can sometimes be seen from a considerable distance. Such was the case at the site of Ozanéaré, discovered in 1961, which is the best example of a group of painted shelters with ring-walls*.



Finally, a number of blocks of stone standing alone near the edges of the regs, shelter paintings of the third school, whose style is schematic. These shelters are generally close to present-day camel tracks. The paintings coincide with the appearance in this land of the horse and later of the camel. They belong to the final period and announce the decadence and subsequent disappearance of rock painting. The camel tolled the knell of a civilization, the end of a world.

Silent, hidden in the shadow of the shelters, at times faintly illuminated by sunlight reflected by the sand, the cliff paintings merge into the stone and only a favourable light at certain times of day allows one to glimpse them.

It was in 1909 that an officer, Captain Cortier, detected their presence and made the first discovery of prehistoric art on the Tassili n'Ajjer. There followed the discoveries of Lanney, C. Kilian, and Bernard; but it was not until 1930 that there came a hint of the true importance of this

THE PLATEAU OF TASSILI N'AJJER ▶
The rocks of Idoo, not far from the new road through the Assakao col.

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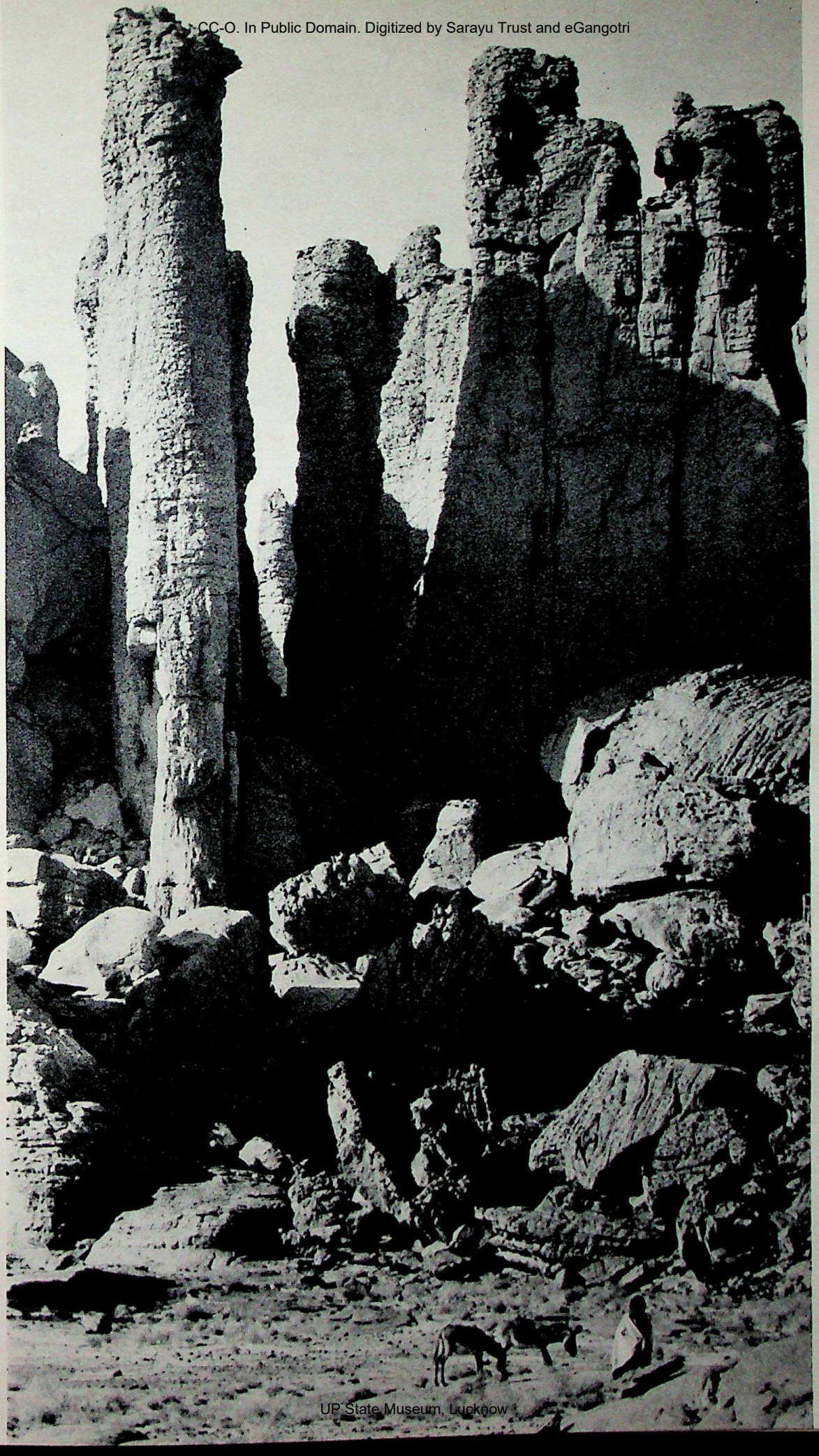

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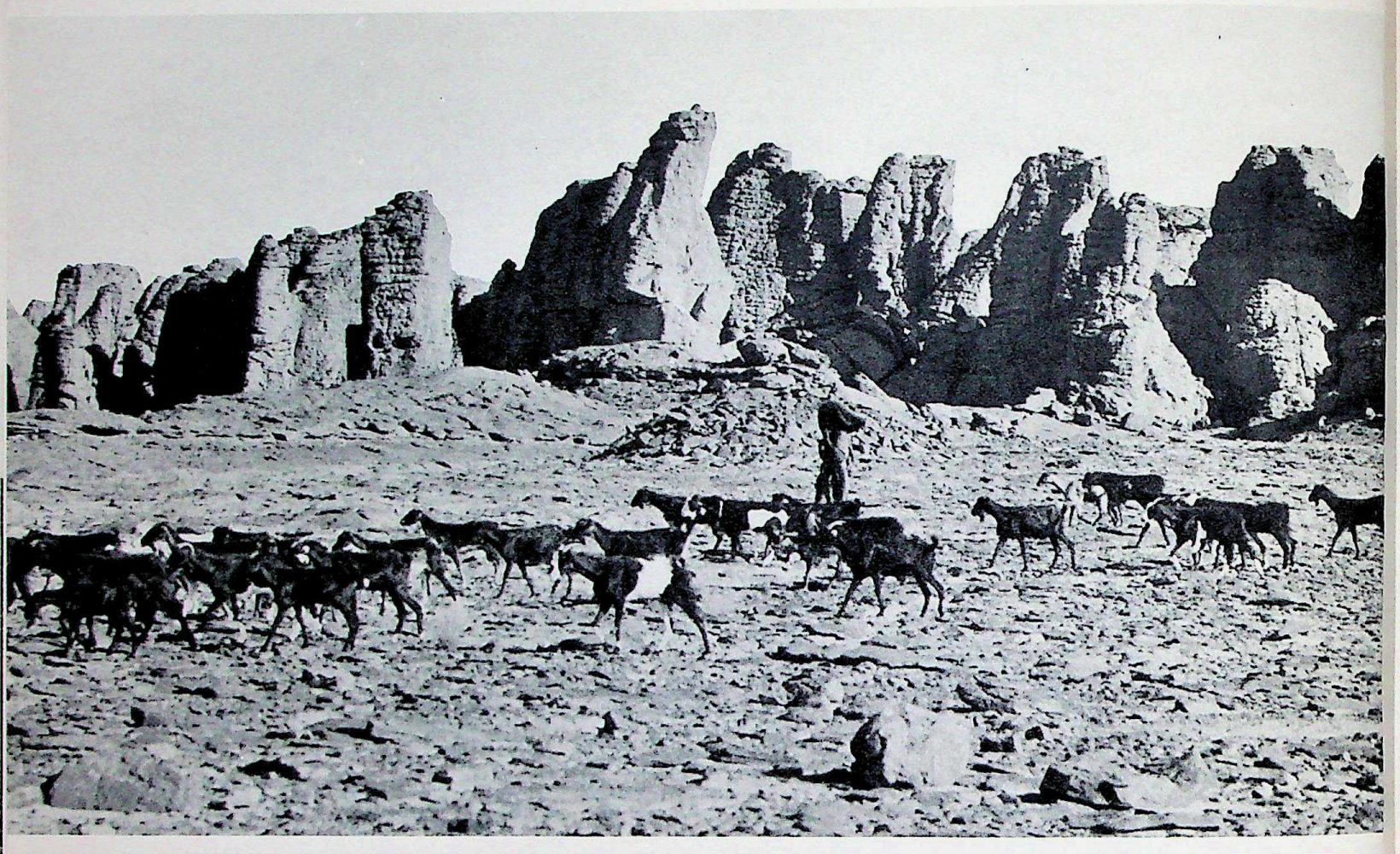

HERD SETTING OUT FOR THE 'PASTURE' AT TIN TEFERIEST
At dawn, the shepherdess drives her goats to the 'pasture'. The animals can find a little nourishment in the bottoms of the wadis. The heap of stones seen directly behind the shepherdess is a prehistoric tomb. The encampment sheltering the family is among the rocks at the edge of the forest of stone.

seat of Saharan prehistoric art, thanks to the discoveries of another soldier, Captain Brenans. He took the measure of the richness of the Wadi Djorat on the north side of the Tassili, and of the Wadi Amazar on the south, as well as many sites of less importance.

More recently, during the winter of 1950-51, a Swiss ethnologist, Yolande Tschudi, travelling alone with a Touareg guide, discovered new sites, which, together with those of Captain Brenans and others,

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formed the principal known and documented collections of cliff pictures. To these was added in 1957 the very important site of Sefar, discovered by Claude Guichard, a member of the archaeological expedition led by the explorer, H. Lhote, with the object of making water-colour copies of all hitherto known paintings.

Some months later, accompanying one of these expeditions, I found nearly all the paintings on this site. In 1960 and 1961 two visits each of three months made it possible for me to contribute to the discovery of more new works and sites; among these Ozanéaré produced some of the finest paintings. The present very dry climate explains their preservation since the drying-up of the Sahara, about two thousand years ago, but it is less easy to see what factors enabled them to survive the preceding three or four millennia in a more humid atmosphere.

A close examination of the paintings shows that a large proportion of the works of the archaic period were thickly painted, or rather pasted, especially with the white colouring matter frequently used by this 'school'. The thickness of the colour is quite noticeable, and sometimes striae visible to the naked eye show the direction in which the paste was applied. This layer, which is especially thick in the stylized mask paintings, is scarcely perceptible in the naturalistic paintings. The painters of this period must have moistened their colours with a very fluid solvent, water or milk (casein is an excellent fixative, and experiments carried out by Dr Pietsch on the colouring materials of the Libyan rock paintings have revealed its presence). As soon as the colour was applied to the wall, it was soaked up by the sandstone, thus becoming hard to destroy. The same thing can be seen at Ozanéaré, where only a few works of the early school remain, lost in a perfect ensemble of the naturalistic school.

As for the colouring agents with which the painters mixed their paints, they can be found almost everywhere, heaped on the ground. I have walked for several hundred metres on a carpet of ochre. The colours most frequently used were various shades of red, purple, yellow and brown ochre, the colours of the commonest schists of the Tassili plateau. Grey, blue, and green are rarer, but nevertheless can be found. The most surprising of the colours is white, which had to be sought in certain particular places and which may have constituted, together with pottery and flint, the basis of a rudimentary economy.

The colouring matter was obtained by grinding these schists on

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AERIAL VIEW OF A ROCK MASSIF IN THE TASSILI

a flat quern, a polished stone slab, with the help of a crusher. The resultant powder was then mixed with a solvent and applied, possibly by brush in the first and last of the schools, certainly so in the naturalistic school.

It seems that the work was painted direct on to the cliff; if a fault appeared, the author corrected his mistake without obliterating it. As a consequence of these corrections we find oxen with four horns and human figures with three arms or legs*; but who can be sure that these oddities were not deliberate?

Fine lines on the walls of the shelters of Jabbaren, seem to suggest that the naturalistic painters drew their works before painting them.

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Careful examination with a magnifying glass of many figures failed either to confirm or deny this theory. It is impossible to find the slightest trace of lines scratching out the contours of the paintings, but the paint may have covered all trace. In fact we have few indications to tell us how the painter worked and what instruments he used (brush, feather, the crushed end of a stick). We can only take note of the places he chose to decorate. It would have seemed natural if the painter had chosen to work standing, facing the surface, in a comfortable position, i.e. with his hand raised to the level of his chest. But something drove him to work in inconvenient recesses where access was difficult, where he had to work lying down, or with his arm in the air, or on his side.

This is all the more inexplicable when nearby shelters, facing the same direction, offered fine untouched and easily accessible surfaces.

This peculiar choice seems to have been dictated by motives which were imperative for virtually all the Tassilian works of art. We may refer, *inter alia*, to the paintings of the magnificent herds which often

SEFAR

A rock shelter typical of the more open parts of the cliffs, where mostly paintings in naturalistic style are found.

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appear on the upper parts of certain eroded faces, protected from sacrilege and vandalism.

Among all works of this kind – showing herds – which I have been able to study from north to south of the Tassili, not one has been altered by the addition of later paintings. This fact is worth noting, for there are numerous shelters where the paintings are superimposed one on another.

The chronology and dating of French palaeolithic art has been made possible by the presence, stratified in cave deposits, of objects decorated with engravings related to the styles of painting and engraving found on the cave walls. The knowledge obtained from small objects recovered in the course of excavations as have benefitted by the best scientific methods – in particular radiocarbon dating (C^{14}) – can be applied to the cave paintings and engravings by simple comparative extension. Stylistic constancy makes it possible to obtain a fairly strict chronology of the art of the French caves by this method.

The total absence of small engraved objects in the Sahara and on the Tassili n'Ajjer makes impossible the establishment of a similar chronology for Saharan rock art.

Another method has been used, based on the examination of certain shelters where several paintings have been superimposed one on top of the other. Examination of the various layers in these paintings enabled a rough relative chronology of the different styles to be established.

It goes without saying that such a method has serious disadvantages. In no case does it allow the dating of the different layers, nor the assessment of the period which may have elapsed between the application of successive layers. Furthermore, not necessarily all styles are represented in superpositions of this kind, and some may even contradict others in different shelters. Nevertheless, it would be premature to regard their study as useless.

To paint and repaint the same wall, whilst nearby are shelters with virgin surfaces equally suitable for decoration, shows, perhaps, that we are in the presence of a rite which is still celebrated far away from Tassili. This is periodic restoration by the Australian aborigines of the cliff paintings, ' Wondjina ', which embellish the faces of certain rocks in their land; a reproduction and fertility rite observed by Elkin in Australia and corroborated by Frobenius in Senegal, where the initiated youths are given the task, during their seclusion, of renewing the rock

SEFAR The prehistoric paintings of the Tassili are always found in the open air. This picture shows a shallow shelter or sanctuary in the middle of the Sefar massif. Painting upon painting in a single style (archaic) are superimposed one upon another on these cliffs (see details on pp. 64 and 65).

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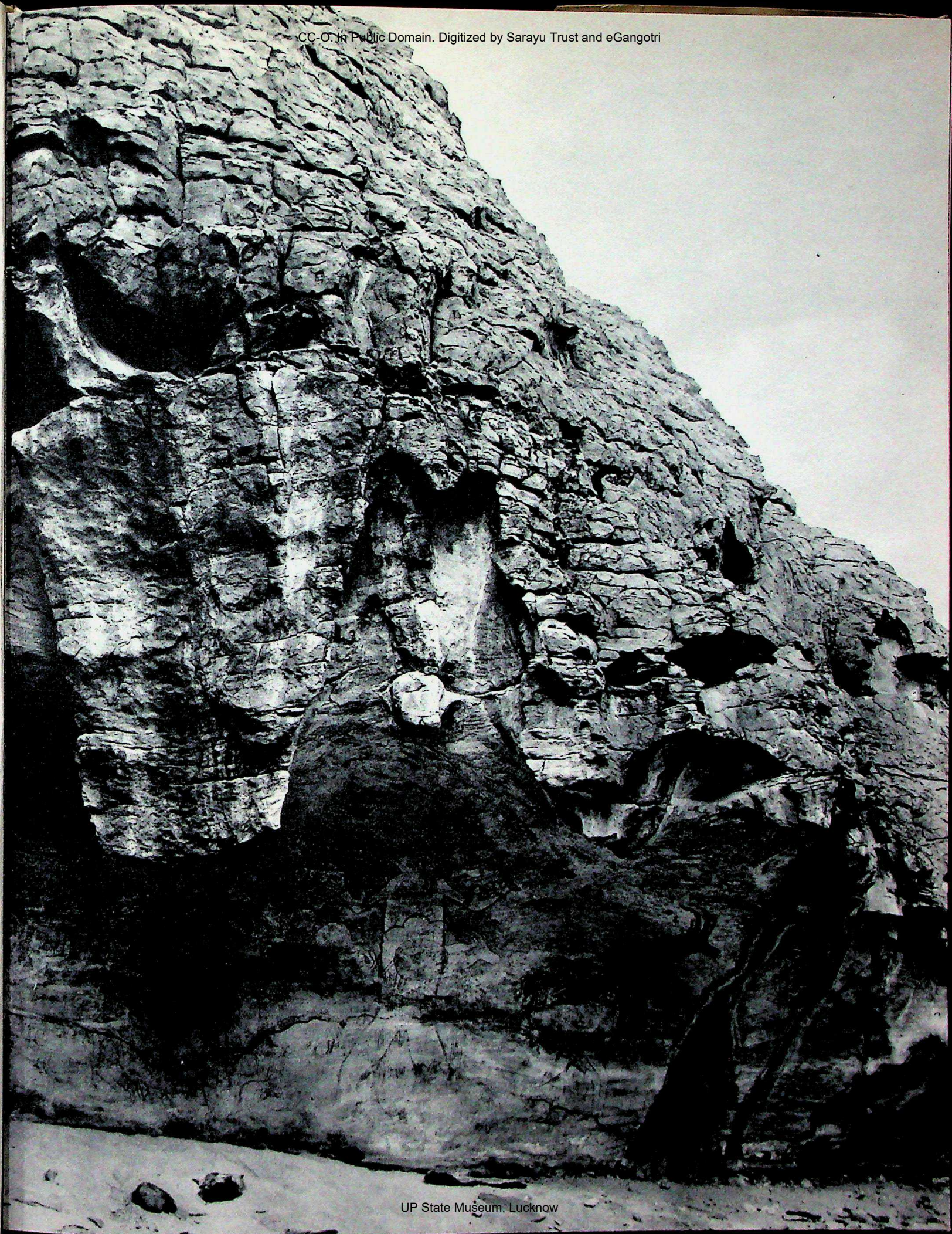

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TANZOUMAITAK

A fine group of superimposed paintings. General view of the chief painted shelter at Tanzoumaitak (a deep sanctuary standing alone at the edge of a wadi), with paintings in the archaic style.

paintings of their clan, sometimes with blood, sometimes with red colouring matter.

An analogous rite is presumably behind the superposition of paintings on the Tassili n'Ajjer. If one drawing generally attracted another, no valid reason, other than a ritual requirement, can explain the regularity of such superpositions among the archaic paintings when the works of the masters of the cattle herders survive always without addition.

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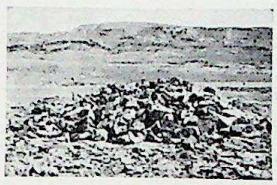
Only modern methods of scientific research can illuminate, though perhaps not solve, these enigmas; statistical study of the superpositions and a systematic photographic survey in colour, black and white, and infra-red, would assist their decipherment and yield a rich harvest of facts.

At the present moment the data which might allow us to grasp the nature of the human society whose traces are shown in the following pages are restricted to these few comments. They tell us so little because we still do not know the meaning of the paintings. The social purpose of an art of this kind cannot be appreciated until the graves and the soil of the shelters have been excavated, and no scientific work of this kind has yet been done on the Tassili. The region's history may not be written on its cliffs as clearly as one would like it to be, but it is assuredly buried in the soil, and sometimes under tons of rocks. Graves of all sizes, simple tumuli of stone*, abound on this plateau. There are also enormous funerary structures, certain of which may symbolize by their shape the male and female organs of reproduction.



All these points lead one to feel that the Tassili and its rock paintings formed an indissoluble aesthetic, economic, social, and religious whole. To determine the race of a people solely on the basis of the pictures they have left us borders on pure fantasy. The Greek profile, it has been said, in all probability never existed. All art is built up of conventions. Each school of painting or sculpture obeys aesthetic laws which are its own. There is no inevitable correspondence between the object and its representation.

No one will believe in the existence of a race of men without heads* such as appear in some of the most recent paintings. No one can assert that the inhabitants of the Tassili were black and steatopygous, nor that the cattle were *Bos africanus*, *primagenius*, or *brachyceros*, until a number of osteological finds have proved them so.

Thus the paintings which we see today, divorced from their palaeo-ethnographic substratum, can only communicate to us that they are in themselves and for themselves – no more than the pure enjoyment of forms and colours.

Only the camera has the ability to re-create the feelings which direct observation can afford, and this it does without any alteration or distortion of the 'real' image.

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SEFAR Two photographs of the same painting. The one above was taken in natural light, the one opposite in infra-red (using a filter to absorb wave-lengths below 8700 Ångstrom units). Infra-red is a part of the spectrum beyond the eye's limit of perception. Special photographic films are sensitive to this form of radiation and are used mainly for scientific work. A special film and filter are used, without any kind of artificial lighting, even when

There can be no doubt of the authenticity of every single one of the records shown here, although there is the precedent of a work in which a number of completely apocryphal paintings were reproduced; two of these were held to belong to Egyptian art. We have examined them. Five years after their discovery nothing remains of them, except the memory of a joke perpetrated by one of the artists employed to make copies. This, however, was an exceptional case. An army of talented painters would be needed to cover thousands of square metres of rock in the midst of the Sahara with apocryphal paintings!

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one is working in the shadows of the shelters. This method is capable of large-scale application, notably in the systematic recording of the paintings in which superpositions appear. Different colours react in different ways to infra-red light. In this radiation the patterns of colour that are normally seen by the eye no longer exist and altogether new compositions appear when infra-red films are developed.

The paintings of Tassili surprise us by their power, the vigour with which they are executed, their flexibility and purity of line, the richness of movement and boldness of colours. Their geographical situation and the landscape around them also contribute to making their existence incredible.

Are we in the presence of mythological designs with supernatural powers?

Do such paintings retrace the great moments in the life of someone who is buried in a tumulus near to the decorated shelter?

No one can claim to be able to offer any explanation of the scenes

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represented by these prehistoric works. We must therefore confine ourselves to recognizing in the paintings men, women, children, animals, objects, details of dress, postures – and to supposing that men, women, and children have been seen on the Tassili, that there were cattle and other animals, that the men used various kinds of bows, dressed in certain ways, were fond of certain poses. Any description which goes further is mere hypothesis.

Thus forewarned, the reader need not be surprised at finding here none of the traditional little stories which generally accompany pictures in many books on prehistoric art. There is no need to invent titles like 'Josephine being sold by her sisters' or 'The Dentist', any more than there is need to find scenes of circumcision, monsters with breasts on their backs, or Martians. It is enough to admire forms which equal in nobility and grandeur the finest creations of the human spirit.

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TANZOUMAITAK

Figures dressed in finery, archaic period. Detail from the centre of the illustration on p. 36. Note the moufflons painted in white over the brown figure.

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1 THE ARCHAIC PAINTINGS

The admirable paintings of Lascaux, the tangled engravings of la Grotte des Trois-Frères, the clay bisons of the Tuc d'Audoubert, and the bas-reliefs of Angles sur Anglin, are now forever famous. Painting, sculpture, and engraving came simultaneously into existence during the Upper Palaeolithic era.

When, at a time much nearer our own, the art of Tassili n'Ajjer appeared, only painting and engraving were present. Sculpture, at any rate monumental sculpture, did not exist. Statuettes have been found in the approaches of Tassili, but none actually in it; nor are they frequent. The bareness and simplicity of their forms reduced to the basic essentials makes these animal sculptures objects of great beauty. But there is no connection between these polished objects and the paintings on the cliffs of Tassili. Such a connection on the other hand does exist between the paintings, engravings, and sculptures of palaeolithic art.

The technical ability of the ancient inhabitants of Tassili enabled them to engrave the stone deeply and to polish certain of the engravings. Why were they not led also to *carve* the raw material which surrounded them?

The flaking of stone for making implements followed a normal evolution as in other civilizations. The neolithic implements of certain Saharan sites easily bear comparison with those of the Fayum and Merimde in Egypt. The excellence of their technique enabled the Tassilians to make arrowheads, flint knives, etc., which were not merely tools but works of art, true delights of flint or quartz and wonders of the adaptation of form to function. Similarly the secret of rock engraving was not unknown to the Tassilians, who have left thousands of works of varying quality and technique (deep polished engravings, pecked engravings, fine-line engravings, etc.). Frequently it happened that flat dark-coloured slabs, exposed to the sun, were engraved, while vertical surfaces were decorated with paintings. For clarity of presentation, this striking collection of new forms is divided here into three large schools – the ' archaic ', the ' naturalistic ', and the ' schematic '. These schools correspond to three distinct attitudes of expression, each comprising a number of styles. Before continuing it is necessary to define these terms.

The term ' school ' embraces several different styles in which a large number of subjects appear. If ' school ' is used in preference to ' epoch ', this does not imply that it corresponds all the same to a given period. There is nothing to prove that one school was not contemporary with another.

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The term does not fix the paintings in time; it merely assembles them in groups.

'Naturalistic' indicates a painting which comes closer to the true representation of the subject than an archaic painting does. The latter created its own forms, which were fixed unlike those of the naturalistic school. The term 'schematic' refers to small, simplified, almost geometric, representations.

The paintings are reproduced here in an order that is roughly chronological. However a number of deliberate departures have placed together the works of different schools for better comparison of the similarities or differences of style which characterize them. Previously published chronologies have been quite incoherent and remote from what the established scientific chronology may one day be. Which are the earliest pictures?

Like all beginnings, that of Tassilian cliff art is elusive. First we have nothing and then we have everything. Mingled, intermeshed, and overlapped, the figures pile up one over another on the rocks. These superpositions fascinate us and in this confusion we strive in vain to find a solution to what seems an enigma.

The archaic school, which is the subject of this chapter on the masks and the masked figures, and also of chapter 4 on the symbols, sometimes invented totally abstract creations to bring beings or things to mind.

Symbolism prompted the execution of every work. It can be sensed in every subject. The artist has striven to express an all-powerful presence, often by giantism. A sense of being in a superior presence still emanates from certain of the works, such as the large masked figures.

The usual technique of this school was flat colour, usually white, surrounded by a broad stiff outline, generally purplish in colour. The most common subjects were strange human figures, giant animals, moufflons, antelopes whose horns are their predominating feature. Sometimes an animal is represented just by an immense pair of horns. Also found are small imp-like figures a few centimetres high, and incomprehensible symbolic markings – dots, crosses, lines, etc.

Thus archaic art began, with the charm of its naivety, the strangeness of its figures, and the puzzle of its superpositions, leading the way to the endless succession of Tassilian rock paintings. Already archaic art embodied in itself some of the elements which were to appear later in works of the naturalistic school.

N.B. The paintings reproduced in this chapter are between 0.05 m. and 3.20 m. in height

TIN TAZARIFT

The animals of the archaic style were usually antelopes, bovids, and especially moufflons, but sometimes rhinoceros, giraffes, ostriches, and elephants. To this style also belong a number of large monsters, nearly always poorly preserved. In the picture opposite is an elephant followed by moufflons (?). Below the elephant strange shapes can be seen, apparently two praying figures.

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SEFAR

Two painted shelters are found on opposite sides of a narrow passage in the centre of the Sefar massif. One of them is literally covered with superimposed paintings, which are so densely intermeshed that they are difficult to read. Original detail, a frieze of moufflons extends from one end of the shelter to the other, a distance of more than 15 m. This is the part of the frieze immediately above the area illustrated on pp. 38-39.

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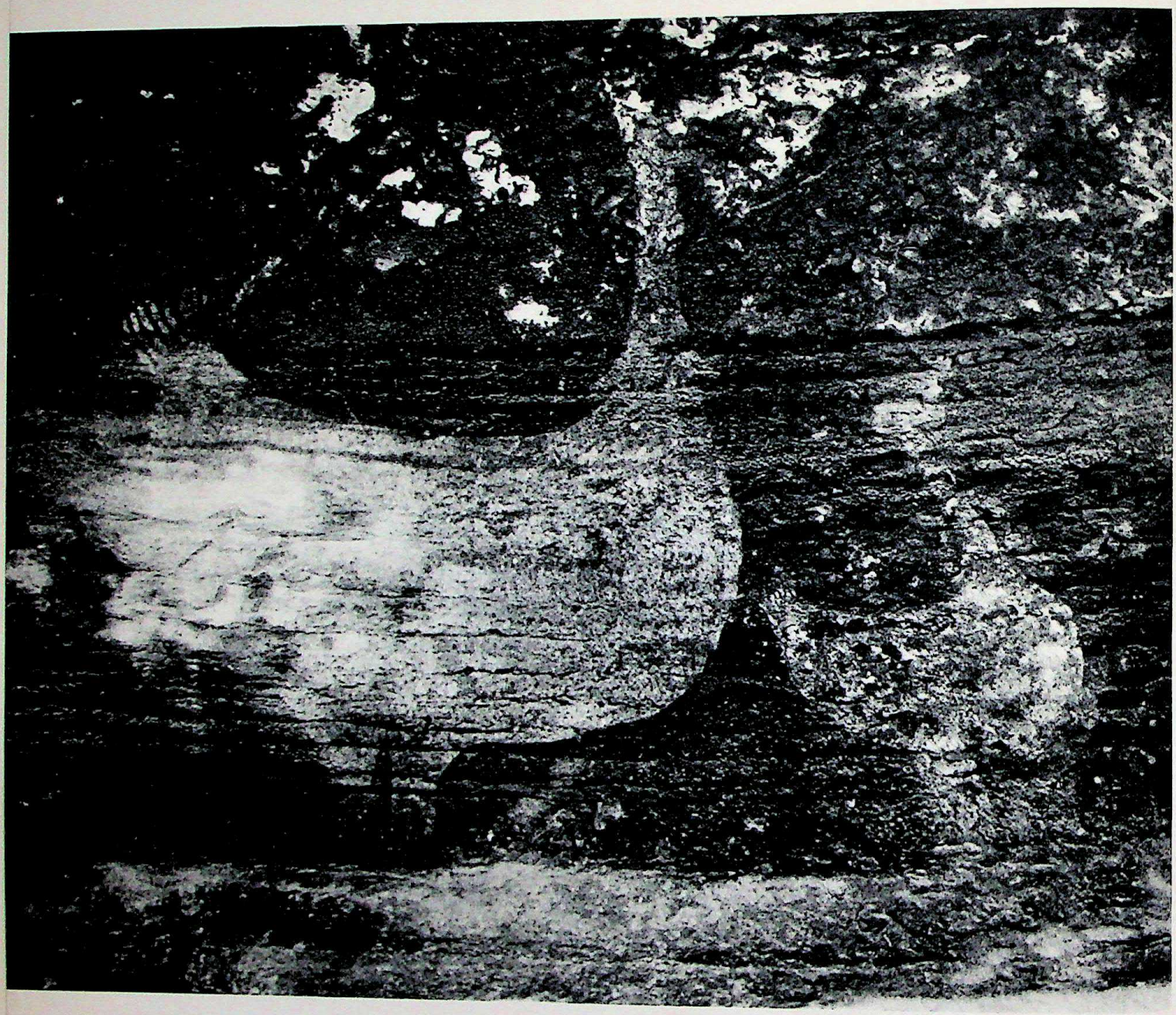

JABBAREN

Giant birds (ostriches?) on the surface of a shelter near the Wadi Jabbaren.

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TANZOUMAITAK

Emerging here from the various superpositions covering the wall of the shelter or sanctuary of Tanzoumaitak (see p. 36) is a moufflon of a new kind, with huge patterned horns.

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◀ SEFAR
Small masked figures in the archaic style (masks suggested by the horns and crests seen on the heads).

SEFAR This scene, which might suggest a private family reunion, is characterized especially by curious spotted objects. These objects appear in many other paintings, and could be one of the 'leading elements' of what we have chosen to call the 'archaic' school. The geometric motives ornamenting the interior of discoidal heads of figures as on pp. 57 and 59 (as well as many other symbols, notably those which resemble jelly-fish and the ovals) could well be a reduced adaptation of the mysterious hats which one sometimes finds on the head of a figure (p. 52, lower right), or stands on the ground nearby, etc. ▶

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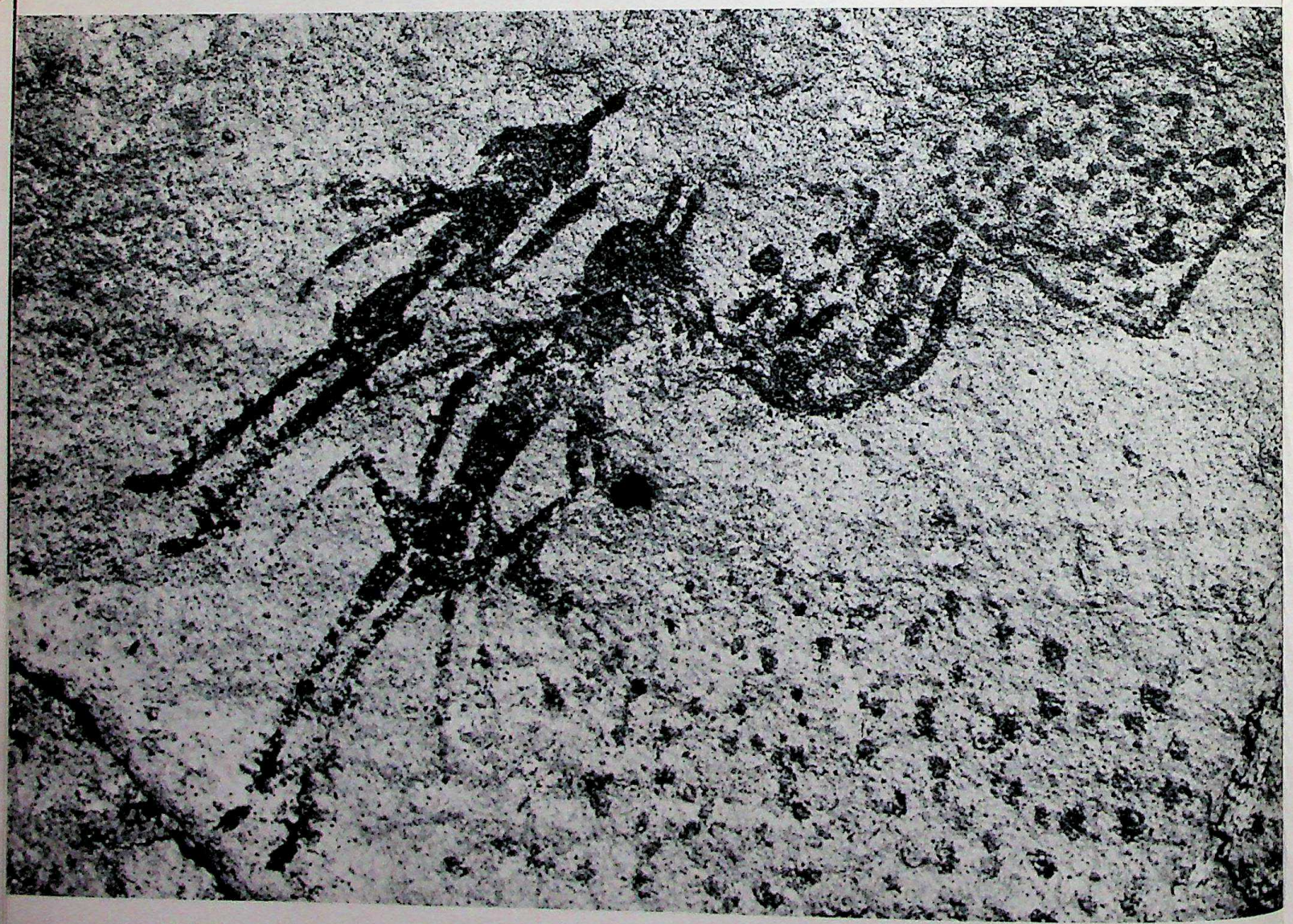
TANZOUMAITAK

The right-hand part of the shelter shown on p. 36. The overlapping of these two figures shows that the superposition of paintings was sometimes deliberate. In this instance, the painter had all the space he could want to the right of the largest figure. There must have been some particular motive which made him prefer the superposition.



SEFAR

54 Figures in a style very close to that of the figures on p. 52.

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JABBAREN

This group of figures obeys the same dictates regarding superposition, here in larger numbers. Basket-shaped objects rest on the heads of the two women in this procession. They are similar to the objects in the picture on p. 53. The colours are yellow outlined in purple.

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MATALEN-AMAZAR

One of the few paintings showing insects. They are reproduced to the same size as the originals, and are painted in white.

TIN TEFERIEST

A large figure in the archaic style, one metre high. Like nearly all the paintings of this phase, this figure is mingled with others related to the figures shown on p. 52 (note the figure in the extreme lower left, which has its counterpart in the centre of the painting on p. 52). It is impossible to determine whether the smaller figures are imposed over the large white woman, or vice versa.

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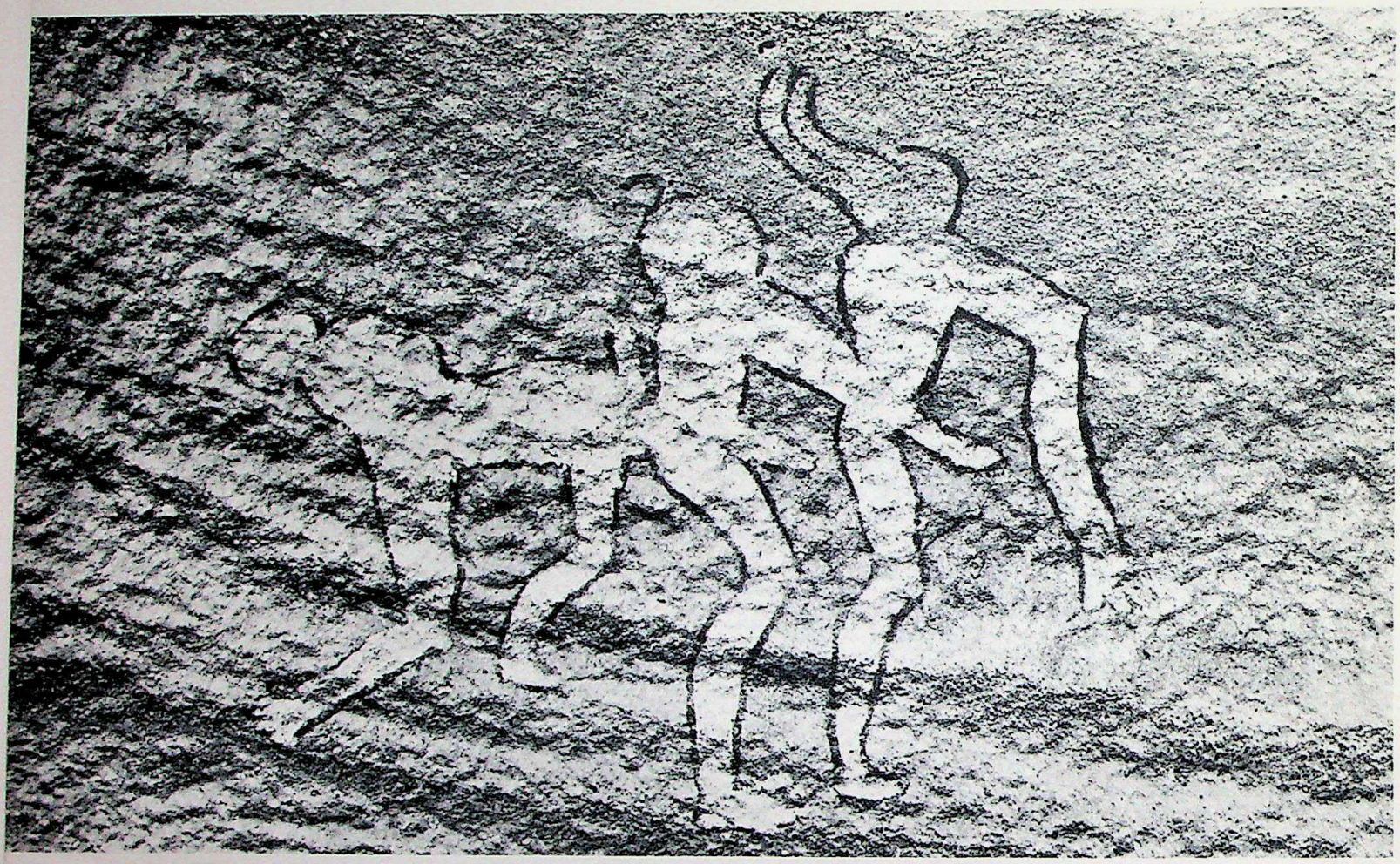

SEFAR

This detail from the paintings in a shelter at Sefar shows a strange group of curious figures in pure archaic style.

SEFAR

Note here the presence of two symbolic objects which the figures are holding in their hands. These objects also appear in the paintings on pp. 62 and 63.

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SEFAR

This caricature is on the same rock face as the painting on p. 60.

SEFAR

Masked figure, 2.50 metres high. Size is one of the features peculiar to the archaic style. Human and animal representations are sometimes of considerable dimensions. Sefar, where this picture is found, is the site containing the largest number of these figures known at present.

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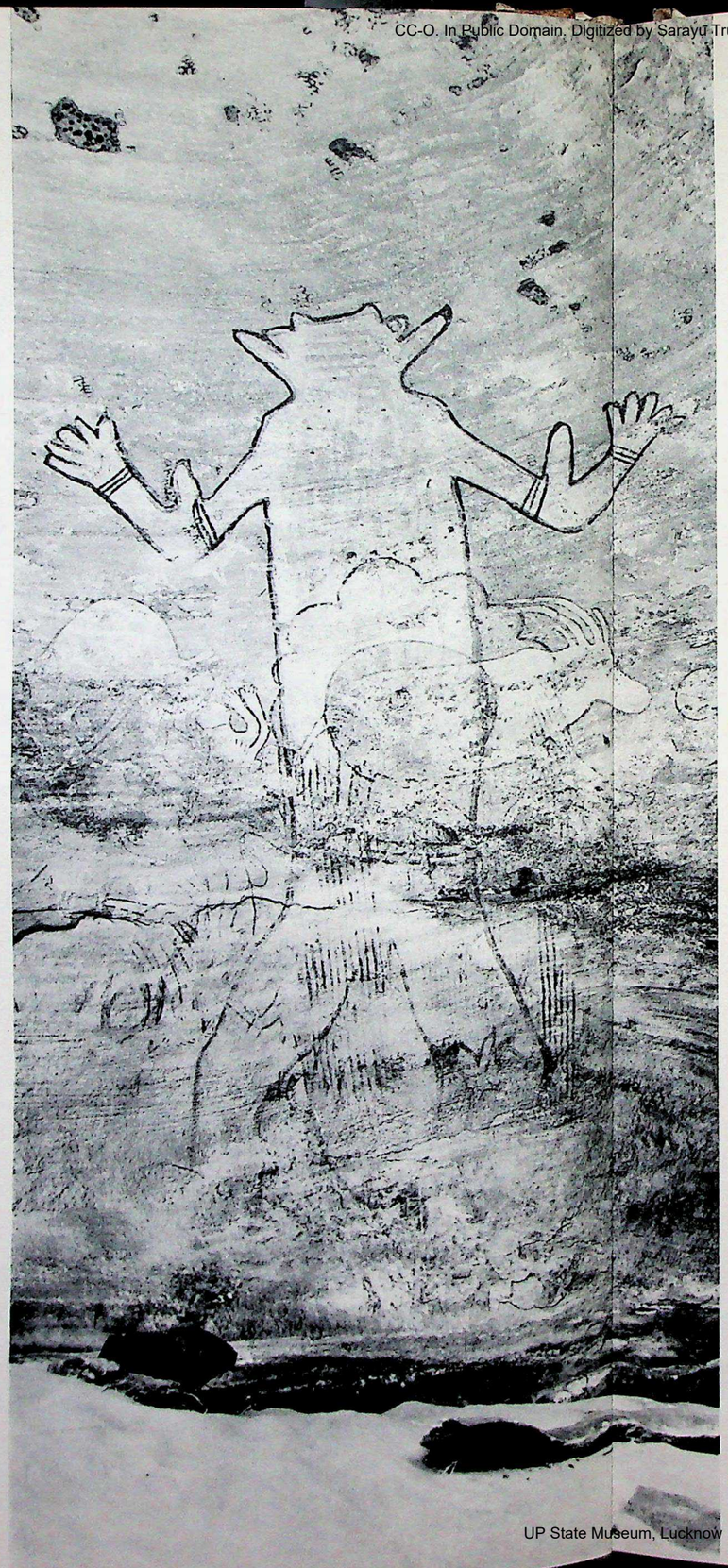
A



B

SEFAR

A and C. At Sefar all giant human or animal representations in this style are accompanied by women in the attitude of these two praying figures. The figure on the left is close to an archaic bovid representation, 2.50 m. long.

B. This masked figure is similar in form and attitude to that on p. 63. The same pose is found in many small paintings. It affords a good example of superposition; the hopeless confusion of the drawings, however, all in the same style, shows how risky it would be to base an entire chronology on a study of the superpositions.

C

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UP State Museum, Lucknow

INAOUANRHAT

After the great masked figures of the archaic style, we find paintings of true masks, directly related to the foregoing figures. We also discover a new style of painting, a style which offers a series of exceptional creations. The reproduction above shows a mask without its human wearer. This is a rare type of painting, but characteristic of a particular style.

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2 THE MASKS

The mask is universally known. Today it is still an instrument of magic which many peoples regard as a sacred object, endowing the man who wears it with supernatural powers. It enables him to raise himself to the level of the spirits. The masked man does not seek to hide himself from the sight of the multitude, or to deceive them. He simply loses his natural state as a human being. The mask confers upon him the virtues of a mythical hero, a totemic animal, or of the spirit which he represents; and, for the audience before whom he performs, it is the spirit, the totem, or the hero, dancing.

The man is merely a puppet obeying the spirit which is manipulating it for a time. Such a man is a member of a secret society protected by numerous prohibitions. These cannot be overstepped without grave danger to the trespasser, for the masked rites are kept secret from the vulgar. The initiates alone are the guardians of the masks, and only penetrate their secrets in accordance with their ascent towards the highest wisdom.

The preparation of the mask is surrounded with mystery, many precautions of all kinds being taken by the sculptor to avoid any blunder toward the eternal spirit which later will occupy it. The mask is not merely a ritual instrument; it is the expression of the rite itself.

The aesthetic search which led to the mask's conception made it a genuine work of art – a sacred art in which symbolism and expression predominate. We also find these two elements in the paintings of masks found on the faces of the rocks of the Tassili n'Ajjer. A powerful symbolism can be detected in these representations – a symbolism which imbued all works of the archaic period, out of many of whose figures the masks developed; the mask later became the most important feature of rock art and finally broke up, giving rise to certain abstract and mysterious representations. (Cf. p. 65).

The spiritual origin of the masks of Tassili might be the moufflon. The archaic paintings give us a series of pictures intermediate between the animal and the mask. The masks used today by the Senoufo tribes of the Ivory Coast do not resemble in any way whatsoever, as has been claimed, the Tassili rock paintings.

N.B. The paintings reproduced in this chapter are between 0.70 m. and 1.20 m. in height.

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TIN ABOTEKA

These masked figures are the only ones on this site. They are olive-green, outlined in purple. The expression of a whole myth appears in these masks, which present almost identical formal characteristics with others found 60 km. away.

SEFAR ▶

Paintings in the style of this mask were often pasted thickly on to the cliffs. If we look closely at this photograph we can see the thickness of the colouring matter as well as the striations left by the painter's tools. These marks are plainly visible in the white zones.

INAOUANRHAT AND MATALEN-AMAZAR ▶▶
(pp. 70 and 71)

These, together with Jabbaren, are the three sites which so far have yielded figures of this type. They measure 0.80 m. in height.

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TIN TAZARIFF

This painting is one of the works showing the highest degree of symbolism. Only the lower part is reproduced on these two pages. All the symbolic elements which accompany the masks appear here in a single group – festoons, wreaths of dots, masked figures, etc., combined in a pattern whose meaning escapes us. A crudely drawn white bovid (not seen here) is mixed up with these figurations and plays an effective part in the total composition.

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3 THE MASKED FIGURES

The masks are generally red and white, emphasized by olive-green.

The preceding illustrations apparently show male beings, and this is clearly evident on pages 75-77 and perhaps page 78. But many figures of the same inspiration show eye-masked women whose breasts take a particular form. Considering their diversity, the different figures grouped together in this chapter may appear to be chosen somewhat arbitrarily. We have taken them together because they come close to the symbolic elements always present in the paintings of masks.

As said in the caption on page 72, each painting in this style is accompanied by symbolic geometric patterns such as lines, dots, festoons, etc. Dots are more or less universal and go back to the paintings in the archaic style. In the case of the masked women, the geometric patterns are generally drawn on the figures themselves, sometimes in a restrained manner (p. 79). One might suppose that they were ornamental – scarifications or tattoos – but the coincidence of these patterns and those of other figures found among the rocks of Tassili cannot be fortuitous.

This chapter brings us to the close of a first period, to the end of a first group of paintings from which there emanates a symbolism endowing each work with mystery, power, and an almost unbearable magic presence.

Their power of fascination has not dwindled over the centuries. A strange emotion grips us when suddenly, in the almost unbroken silence of the desert, we stumble upon one of these mysterious figures hidden in the shadow, seeming to watch us intently. What strange ceremonies have been performed where now we stand? How great is the exalting and agonizing mystery of these silent places where the gods spy on us!

It comes as a great relief, like waking from an obsessing dream, when, after a day's work exploring the past amid these labyrinths of stone, we rediscover the present in the shape of a patch of sand occupied by a quilt and a box of equipment at the foot of a boulder. This has become our home, a comforting microcosm where the ochre gods of prehistory cannot reach us, where, despite one's loneliness in the midst of the desert, one feels at ease, safe and secure when night falls on this fantastic world.

N.B. The paintings reproduced in this chapter vary between 0.70 m. and 1.20 m. in height.

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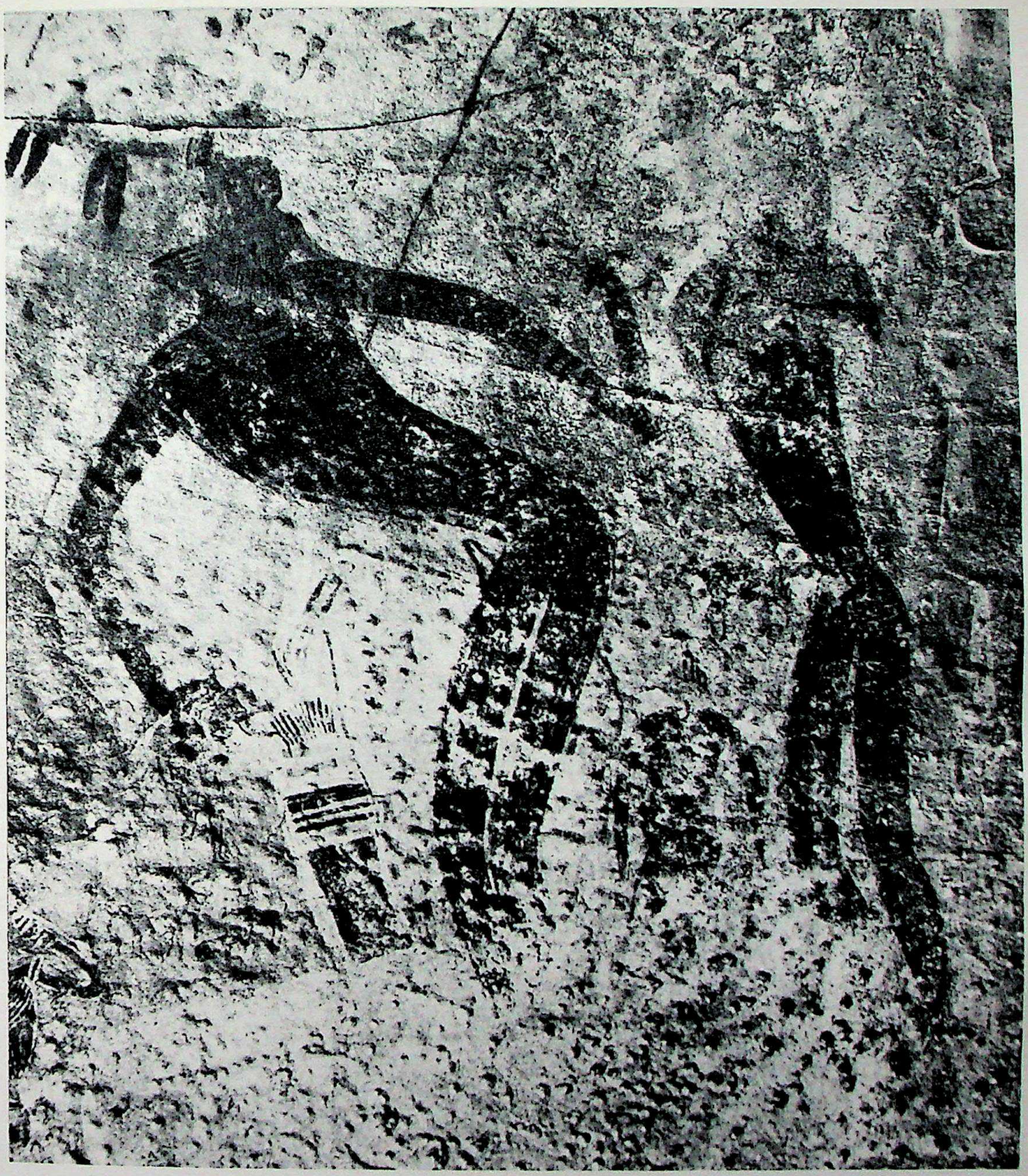

TÉCHÉKALAOUEN

With paintings such as this we enter upon a new style in the representation of masked figures. This is a detail from a large group. All around are the same symbolic elements that accompanied the masks of the preceding style.

SEFAR (p. 76, in colour)

The arrangement of the different coloured zones dividing the face of this masked figure suggest that the mask is seen in profile.

INAOUANRHAT (p. 77)

Sketch of large dimensions drawn in white. Note the similarity with the figure on the page opposite.

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TIN
TAZARIFT
Masked
figure.

SEFAR
Masked
woman.

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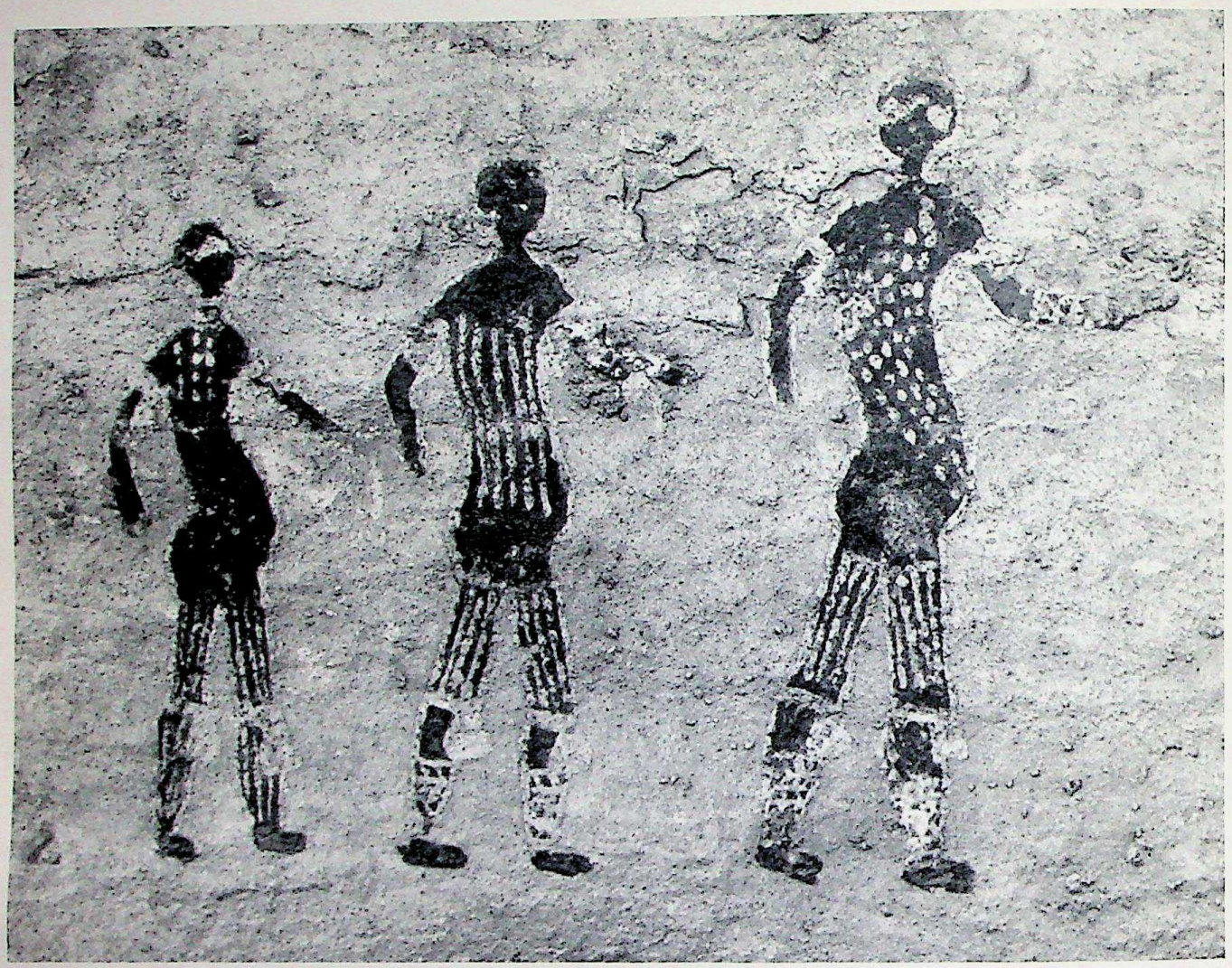

SEFAR

Small female figures, with decorations on their bodies in the style of the masks, painted on the wall of a shelter which overhangs the entrance to the canyons of the Wadi Sefar.

INAOUANRHAT

One of the most remarkable works of the Tassili, situated on the wall of a completely isolated shelter. This running woman bears all the symbolic elements characteristic of the style of the masks.

SEFAR (pp. 82 and 83, in colour)

A group of masked men and women with their faces muffled in a manner strangely reminiscent of the simpler drawing on p. 61 (left-hand figure). This painting shows two stylistic conventions which governed pictorial creation from the birth of this art – the protruding female belly and the flat or even concave male belly. The latter always narrowed abruptly at the waist. Sometimes we find similar conventional distortions in the naturalistic style.

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JABBAREN

Negatives of right and left hands in a group of poorly preserved figures of the same type as that on p. 76. Hundreds of similar works are found on the cliffs of the Tassili.

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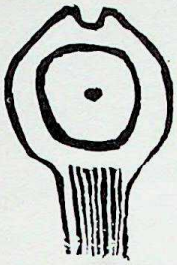
4 THE SYMBOLS



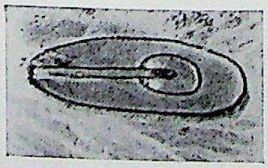
The symbolic patterns of the archaic style are too numerous to be reproduced here in any number.

Most of them are wholly abstract. Some are already familiar to us – masks, dots, festoons, etc. The archaic paintings provide many others. The meaning of these designs is no more intelligible than the spirals, lines, and dots found in the engravings. No more so are the hands which astonish us and which, however realistic they may be, remain mystic emblems.

Hands are found in rock drawings all over the world. In the first paintings in the depths of the palaeolithic caves, there are hands; and in our own times the Australian aborigines still draw them on the surfaces of the rocks around them.

Tassili n'Ajjer has a number of such paintings. The majority are white negatives obtained by spraying (probably from the mouth) a colouring solution on to a hand held against the rock (p. 84); these are distinct from positives which are the print of a hand (plastered, for example, with clay) on a clean surface. Positive hand imprints are not yet known on the Tassili. But another sort of representation does exist in this land – the painted hand or, more accurately, the painted forearm, which is found in considerable numbers in a style which is difficult to place. The decoration on these hands is usually geometric.

As well as the paintings, the tombs spread over the surface of the Tassili (indicating a certain density of population) afford further evidence of the importance of symbolism in the life of these people. Most of these tombs are no more than heaps of stone, but a number are genuine funerary monuments, sometimes of considerable size. What symbolism is hidden in these tombs? An erotic engraving which I discovered at Matarat* may explain the form of these tombs which, it seems to me, represent the male and female reproductive organs.



The burial chamber is found below a heap of stones at the centre of the tomb.

The engraving to which I refer is remarkable neither for its subject nor for its treatment but rather for its position – on the rock floor of a raised shelter (a kind of sanctuary) without paintings. This rock has been highly polished, and the polished area takes the form of a couch fitting the curves of head, back and loins in such a way that when one lies on this part of the rock one is not only unaware of its hardness, but actually experiences a

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N.B. The hands and arms reproduced in this chapter are life-size.

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sensation of comfort*. And here, in this precise place, is one of the engravings of a particular kind in which Tassili abounds. With these tombs and erotic engravings, one wonders if one is not in the presence of another form of ritual symbolism, this time no longer abstract but figurative.

SEFAR

This illustration shows three styles of superimposed painting. First of all a forearm, then a rhinoceros whose hind-quarters can be seen over the hand, and lastly an ostrich drawn in thick lines; one can see only its neck (cut off at the top of the photograph) and gizzard. Careful examination of this picture will show how difficult it is to determine the order in which the various figures in superimposed drawings were done.

TIN TEFERIEST

Hand in the archaic style on the wall of a sanctuary-shelter.

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TAMRIT

These antelopes are painted on an overhang jutting out to the right of an isolated sanctuary-shelter on the edge of the Wadi Tamrit. There are only a few other traces of paintings in this shelter. (See detail p. 91.)

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5 NATURALISTIC ART

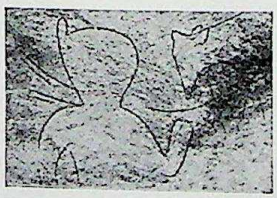
Tassili offers us pictures in a great variety of styles. Some of them have the feeling of a free spontaneous art, an art of pure enjoyment. They approach from the depths of time, animated by the life which radiates from each figure.

Naturalistic art appeared, it seems, at a single stroke. Joyously and exuberantly, it invaded all the rock faces. The study of the earlier styles indicates already a distinct evolution towards direct representation, but the period of actual transition is very poorly represented.

The so-called naturalistic style has many aspects. There are animal representations – giraffe, rhinoceros, antelopes, ostriches, elephants (the figures which seem to represent hippopotami* are of inferior quality – regardless, moreover, of the sites where they are found). Next come bovids and certain other animals such as goats, sheep, and dogs. The only birds are the ostriches; there are also a few fish.

As with the archaic school, it is impossible to apply a single denominative expression to all these many representations. It would be absurd to speak, for example, of naturalism in the giraffe on page 96.

To adopt the term 'style of the bovid period' would be no more satisfactory. It introduces an altogether gratuitous idea of absolute time.



We have, in fact, no key which enables us to place in time these two styles. Nothing proves that they did not coexist. One particular rock face even provides, side by side, a figure with discoidal head and an admirable bovid*. These two figures, drawn with an extremely fine line, are almost certainly the work of the same artist; the manner of execution, both of the drawing and of the colour, are exactly alike.

Apart from countless animal representations in the naturalistic style, thousands of human figures exist on the Tassili. They show admirable powers of observation and representation down to the smallest details, and disconcert us by the beauty, nobility, and diversity of their attitudes. We discover in these admirable rock paintings the strange power of seduction which the former populations of the plateau of Tassili n'Ajjer exercize over us.

N.B. The paintings reproduced in this chapter are between 0.15 m. and 0.35 m. in height.

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JABBAREN

It is hard to assign these little gazelles to any definite style. It seems likely that, along with the antelopes from Sefar on pp. 92-93, they represent an intermediate stage between the archaic and the naturalistic paintings.

TAMRIT ▸

Antelopes.

SEFAR (pp. 92 and 93, in colour) ▸▸

Many paintings similar to these antelopes are found on the cliffs of the Tassili.

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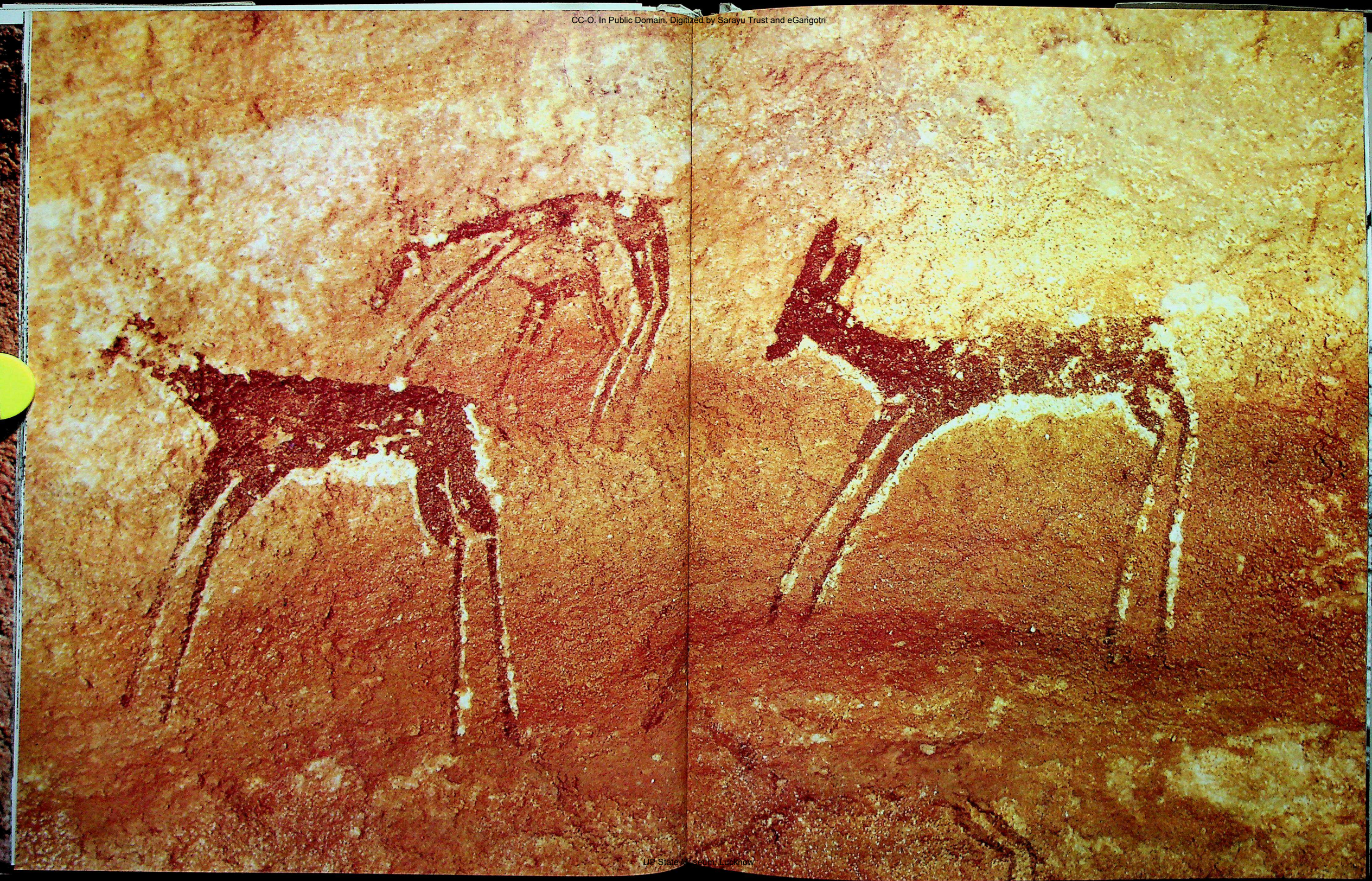

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TIN ABOTÉKA

Elephants appear frequently among the rock paintings, but they are either of archaic workmanship or in recent style. The type of representation shown here is rather rare. Painted in grey on a smooth patch in the middle of a very rough rock face, the elephant seems to emerge from behind a cloud, and this reminds one of the 'cloud elephants' in South African paintings.

OZANÉARÉ

Every site on the Tassili has its rhinoceros or its hippopotamus. The rhinoceros of Ozanéaré is one of the finest found so far.

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◀ SEFAR

This animal, apparently a giraffe, appears near a large herd of cattle in the purest naturalistic style. It reveals an entirely new aspect of Tassilian art.

JABBAREN

These creatures represent ostriches. The legs are painted while the rest of the bodies are engraved. The engraving technique was probably pecking. These ostriches are found in the middle of the shelter (see pp. 160-161). Ostriches are frequently depicted in the Tadjélamine region and in the northern part of the Tassili.

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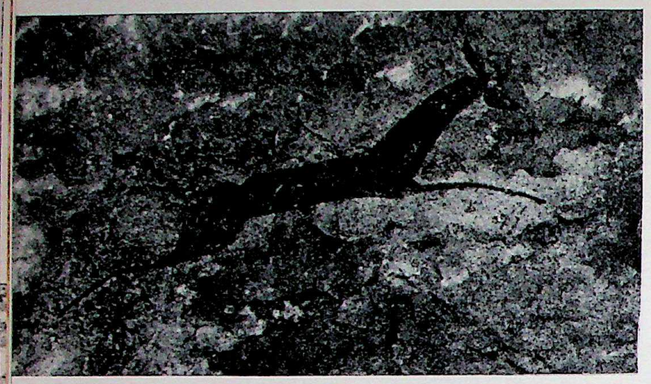

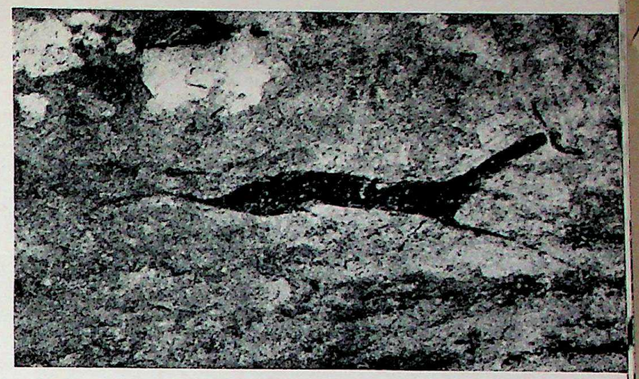

JABBAREN

Above, left and right, two galloping gazelles. Below, three human figures in curious attitudes. One sits with his bow laid on the ground some distance in front of him, the other two are in shooting position, but hold their bows back to front. Apparently they do not intend to shoot at the animal fleeing from them and therefore it cannot be a hunting scene. Hunting scenes must be extremely rare in rock painting.

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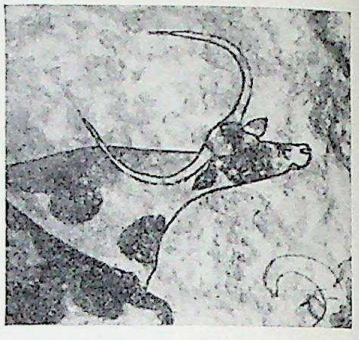
6 THE BOVIDS



The extraordinary variety in the pictures of cattle confronts us with a difficult choice. It is necessary, however, to bring the various styles face to face. Accordingly in this chapter considerations of chronological order have been abandoned in order to bring together some of the principle masterpieces of different periods, among them the astonishing engraving of Térarart on pages 108 and 109.

The creative genius of the Tassili painters shows at its best in these paintings. Movement is admirably observed: we see cattle running, bellowing, isolated or in groups, and painted in colours which are among the most beautiful and varied of the entire Tassili assemblage. Sometimes the creature is outlined by a single broad line; sometimes the outline is broken and made up of a number of short lines. The representation of the horse is the occasion for a series of interpretations where certain requirements seem to have guided the hand of the artist. Thus, in a single group, the horns of the animals are indicated sometimes in normal perspective and sometimes in full face while the head is shown in profile. As for the indication of the animals' markings, it is difficult to comment at all on the motivation which inspired it, as the variety is infinite.

What is the significance of these innumerable animals which one encounters on the rock faces of Tassili?

Are they a sort of livestock inventory, or rather a mythological description connected with the fate of the herds, and thus with the survival of the human groups dependent on them? Some of the animals are purely imaginary, like the bovids and giraffe with two heads, of which a few examples are found here and there on the Tassili (p. 106) – strange beasts from a context whose significance escapes us and is in danger of escaping us for ever. Finally, let us note that cattle are the main theme of the largest of the organized assemblages of pictures, where sometimes a hundred beasts may be seen marching side by side.

These paintings are of variable quality and are generally isolated, covering the faces of rocks hidden in certain obscure corridors. In these assemblages the cattle are rarely alone, as they are in the case of the large herd of the Wadi Tamrit, which is accompanied by no human figure. There are generally human beings accompanying the herds, as we will see later.

N.B. The paintings reproduced in this chapter are between 0.10 m. and 0.35 m. in height.

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SEFAR

The horns of this pacing bull are shown from the front while the rest of the animal is shown in profile.

JABBAREN (pp. 102 and 103)

This cow with only one horn (why?) is one of the finest animals of Tassili. It appears on the roof of a very low shelter where there is only room to crouch and which can be entered only by crawling. This figure, whose colour is red, is reproduced to the same size as the original painting.

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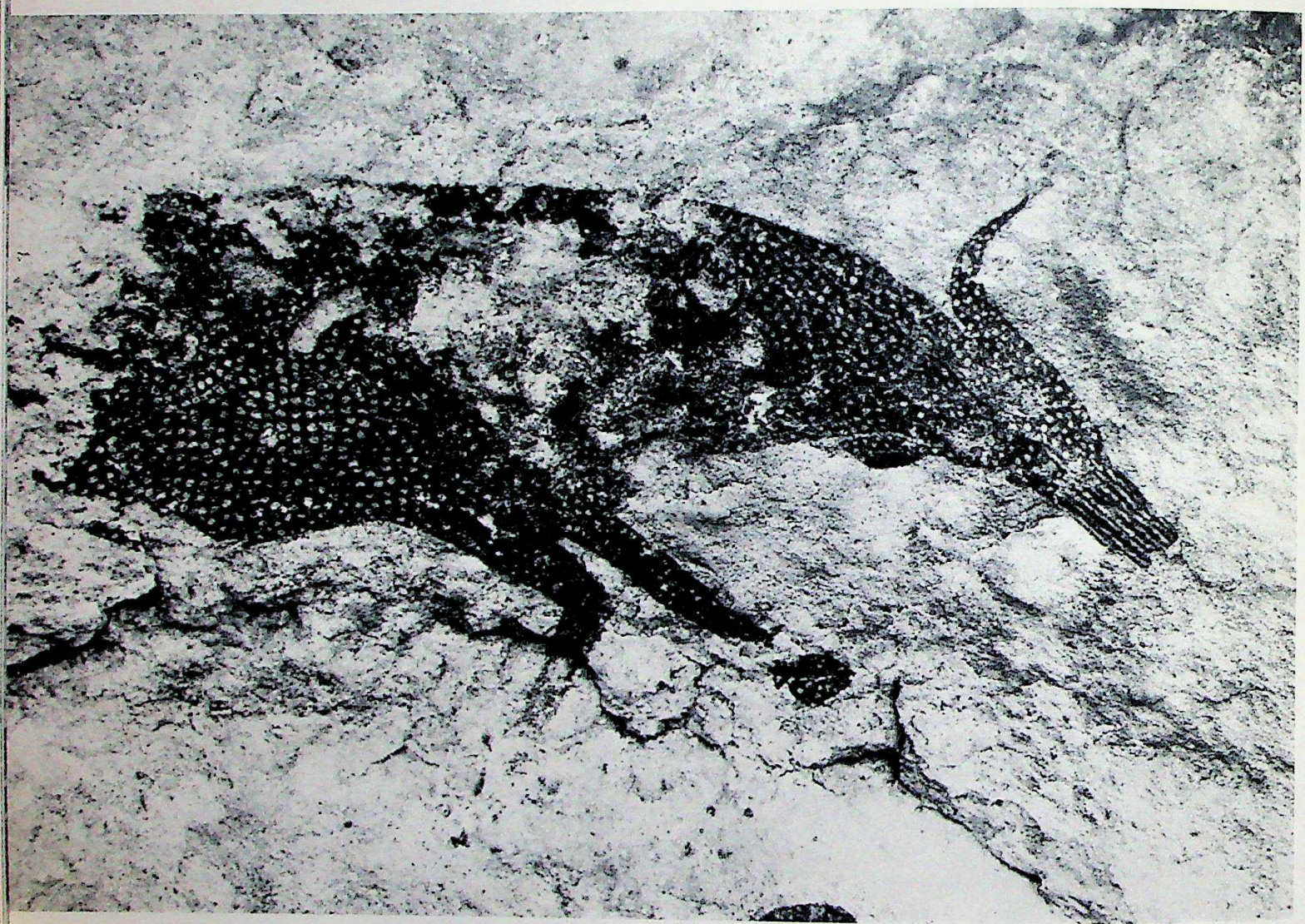

SEFAR

This new shape is the picture of another bovid, of which only the fore-quarters survive. The head is in an unusual position, and the rest of the animal is seen in profile. The body is brown and the spots are white.

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TIN TAZARIFT

This bovid in geometric style is apparently contemporary with the headless figures (see p. 176). Thus it belongs to a more recent stage than the animals in naturalistic style.

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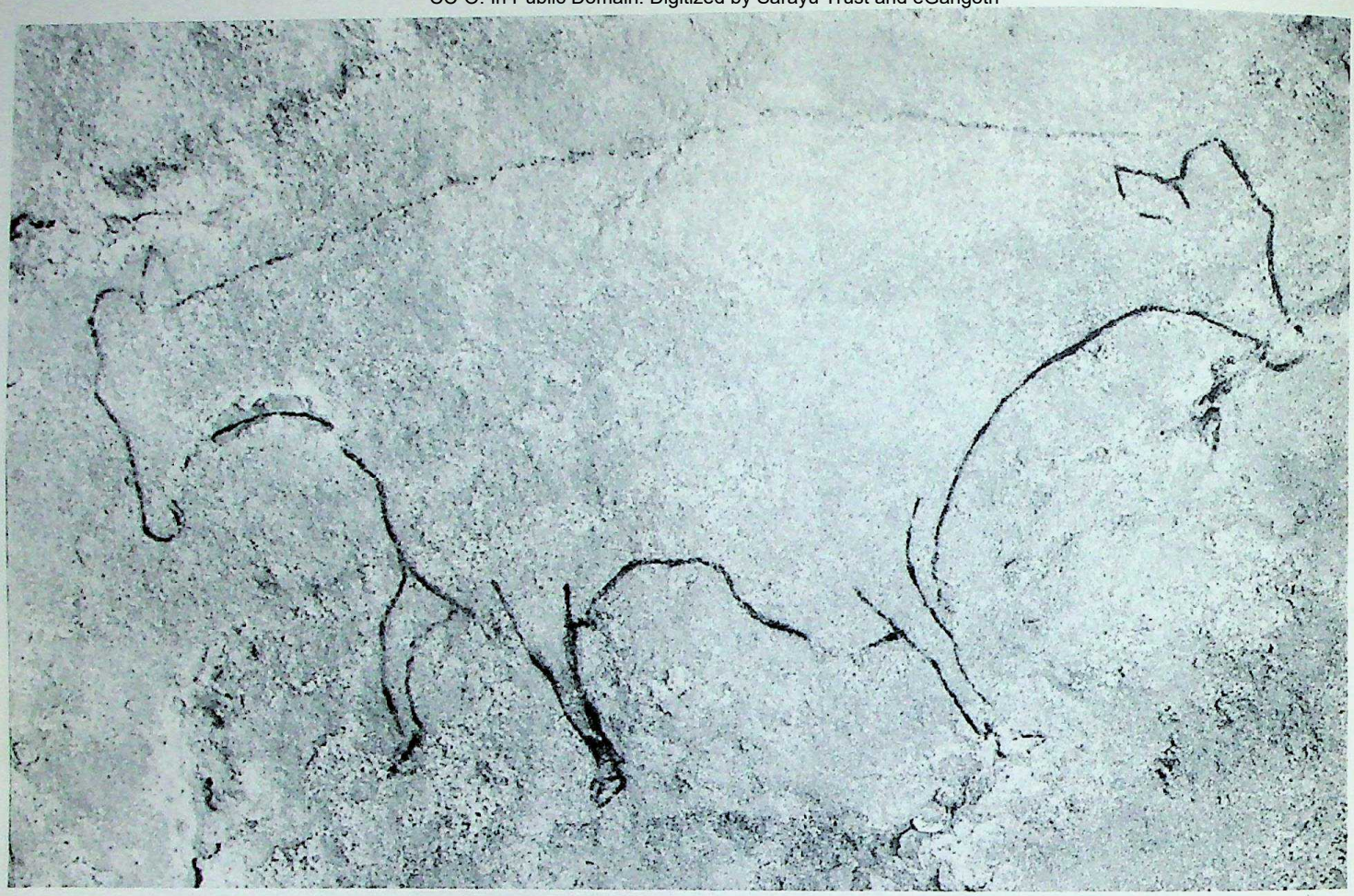

SEFAR

This two-headed cow, drawn in red, appears alongside the painting on p. 134 in a small isolated shelter.

JABBAREN

This herd of cattle is the most richly coloured painting hitherto recorded on the Tassili. We reproduce here the only part of this large group still visible, the remainder having seriously deteriorated.

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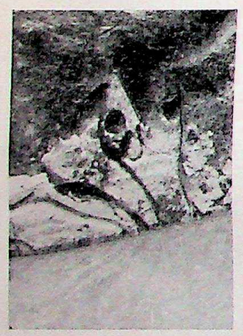

TÉRARART

The grooves in these deeply cut and polished figures seem by some curious optical illusion to to be in relief when in fact they are sunken. It is perhaps the finest engraving so far known on the Tassili. The base of the rock on which it appears is buried in the bed of the Wadi Edjériou. When the wadi is flooded after rain, the muzzle of the lowest of the cattle touches the water, as though it were drinking (see above).

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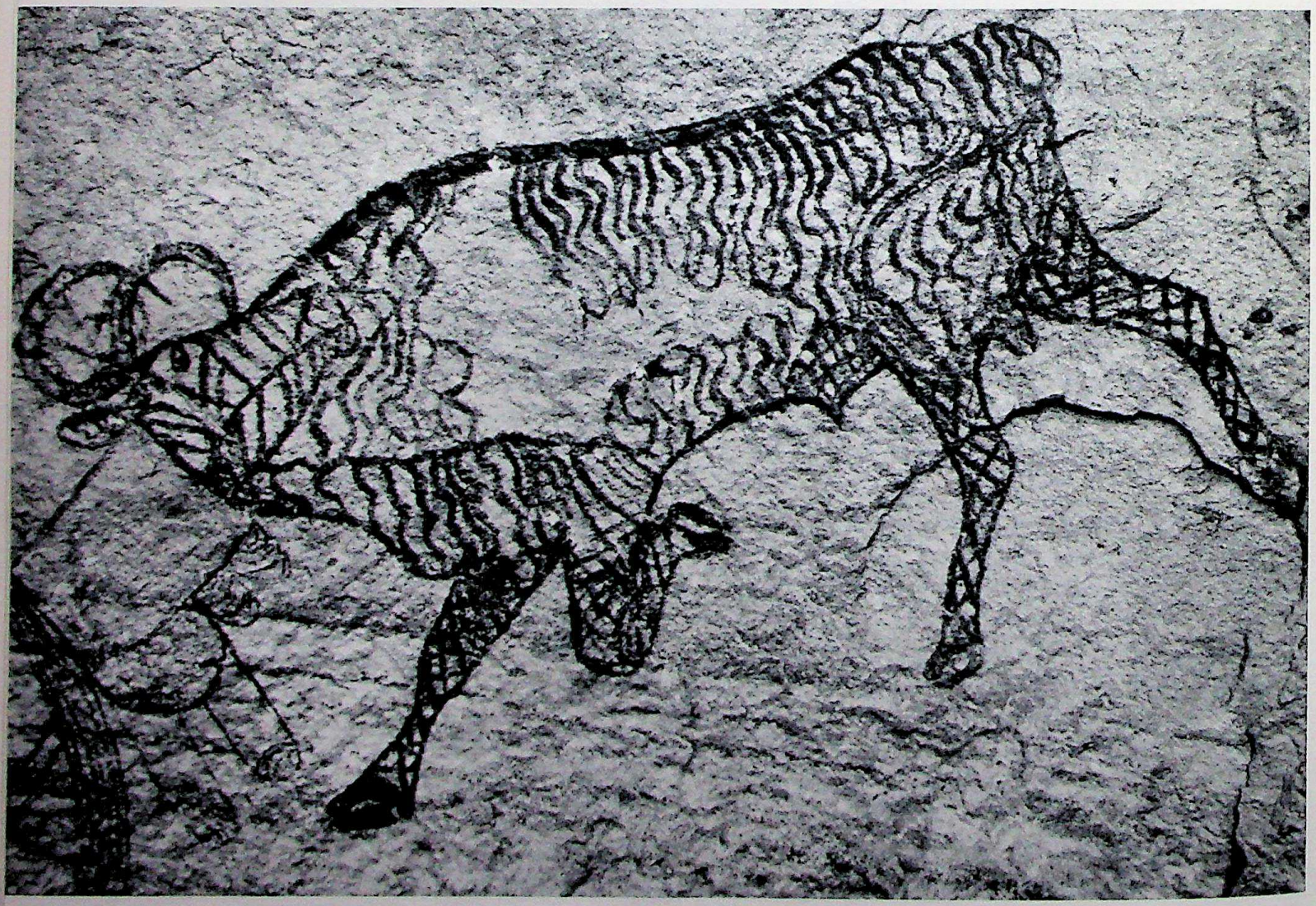
TADJÉLAMINE

This ox, looking backwards, is painted on a rock at the side of the Azoumzoum abaraka (track), where the bull on p. 114 and the vehicles on p. 186 are also found. It is one of the most curious paintings of the Tassili. The hide is represented by wavy lines skilfully conveying a sense of depth. The drawing reveals the movement with extraordinary precision and truthfulness.



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SEFAR

Careful examination of the way this picture was drawn reveals a single curved line running from the muzzle to the breast. Here the paint on the brush ran out; the artist recharged it and added the dewlap with a single masterly stroke. The back was drawn similarly with a single broad line. The animal is running and one is struck yet again by the accurate observation.

SEFAR (pp. 112 and 113, in colour)

On the same rock as the painting above there is the bovid reproduced here in facsimile. The elongation of the neck emphasizes that it is bellowing. The open mouth and the eyes are indicated in reverse, as is the horn which accentuates the movement of the head.

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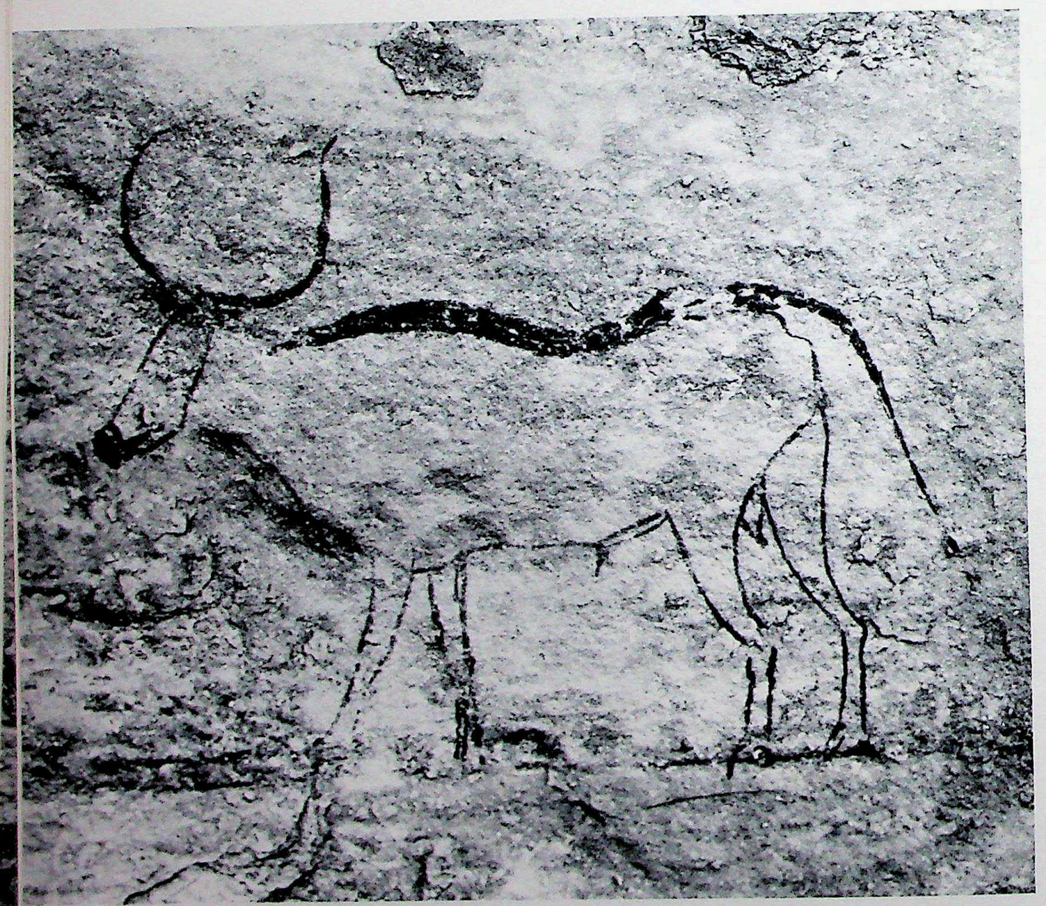

TADJÉLAMINE
A painting of the recent period.

SEFAR
A group of cattle.

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The human figures shown here, all of whom accompany their herds of cattle, are from different sites. The left-hand figure on p. 116 is from Ouan Bender, the other two from Sefar. The figure on p. 117 is from Jabbaren. The first and last of these figures are 60 km. apart as the crow flies. Together with the figure on p. 119, they all display different techniques. Yet in every case the pose is identical. It is remarkable that all the human beings accompanying herds on the rocks of Tassili are shown in the same attitude.

7 MEN AND CATTLE

One wonders why there should be so many cattle represented on these rocks. Studies of the way of indicating the horns, of the placing of the animals and of the markings on their hides, have led to many extremely dangerous hypotheses. Only a statistical study of all these figures could be of any help to us.

Is this figure always juxtaposed with that one? Is the position on the walls of the herd paintings always the same? Does every herd painting have an animal with downward-curving horns? There are innumerable other questions which only a detailed analysis demanding years of research could possibly answer.

The introduction of a human figure into these paintings gives a certain unity to this animal world. In fact, as soon as the herds are accompanied by human figures, one of the latter is always found in the same position – erect, one hand on the hip, an arm extended forward. This is true of all the similar paintings of Tassili and for at least one painting of the Haut Mertoutek in the Hoggar.

Formalized attitudes appear in many scenes decorating the cliffs of Tassili. Here indeed attitude, or more usually scenes containing several figures in conventionalized attitudes, seems to be the active element in the art, just as it was in some of the older works.

We have deliberately grouped together a number of leading themes in order to define more clearly the universe of forms which, by virtue of compulsions of which we are ignorant, forced itself on the painters of Tassili. The interpretation of ancient rock art from the starting point of modern ethnographic conclusions on this or that race today presents certain difficulties. It is difficult to prove that two peoples, separated by an interval of some thousands of years, had similar customs and ways of living; indeed it is unlikely that they had. Nevertheless, I have used this comparative method, not in order to interpret the life of the neolithic herdsmen of the Sahara, but to catch a glimpse of the psychological processes of so-called 'primitive' populations.

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I have chosen the Baras, a country people of Madagascar, in order to show how certain customs and myths governed the lives of these people, and especially to demonstrate the importance of the role played by cattle in their daily existence. In this society it is the men who are familiar with the magical charms which protect the herds; it is also the men who milk the cows. The receptacles for the milk are sacred, and if, by chance, one of them is broken, it is placed on the straw of the cattle paddock. The wood of the paddock is never burned. The tramping of the rice paddy by the cattle is the occasion for rejoicing in which the entire family must participate.

The life of this animal has a value equivalent to that of a man, and to give an ox is to pledge a life. If the pledge is exchanged, it is for a magic charm. Without the ox, no rite is possible, and without ritual there can be no life for the community. The ox is sacrificed to secure the favour of the gods and of ancestors. Alliances and maledictions are sealed with its blood. The Baras also mark the ears of their cattle, and this mark is a badge which makes it a member of the family to which the herd belongs, by the same right as the human members of the family.

Finally, these herds, comprising the very substance of wealth, may attract the attention of thieves; but among the Baras robbery is admired – especially the stealing of cattle by force of arms, which is regarded as an honourable deed, an exploit befitting a 'warrior'. One could cite many other examples. The rites taken together would every time show the same kind of prohibitions, connections, and pacts between men and animals.

It is important for the Ajjer Touareg of the present day, for whom goats have replaced the cattle of former times, to throw away milk, even the few drops which remain at the bottom of a container when he has drunk the contents. If certain prayers are not recited at once, his wife will become sterile. Here, as with the Baras and all neolithic populations, the life of the animal depends always on that of the man, and vice versa.

If the mental process which bound the ancient inhabitant of the Sahara to his herd differed from that of present-day country people, it was no doubt because a greater strictness and a larger number of rites and prohibitions defined the nexus between man and his animals.

One may ask whether these myths and legends, the creed of an intimate liaison between man and beast (myths and legends which are common to all humanity), were not the basis of the Tassili rock paintings, which we now appreciate only for their prodigious aesthetic value. But this is to raise the entire question of how the art originated, and exceeds the scope of this book.

TIN TAZARIFT

In certain paintings cattle appear with a collar around their neck; sometimes an object (amulet?) is fastened to the end of the collar. In this picture the lowest beast wears a collar and carries a little forked object in its mouth, such as is also found in other paintings (pp. 120-121, top right).

SEFAR

(pp. 120 and 121, in colour) One of the masterworks of the Sefar site, suggesting serenity, tranquillity and grandeur. Found 5 m. above the ground, hidden in a narrow corridor, this painting (about 4 m. wide) shows us a herd, two huts, and several human figures including three children.

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N.B. The paintings reproduced in this chapter are between 0.15 m. and 0.35 m. in height.

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SEFAR

This couple, sitting face to face beside what represents a hut, appears on the wall of the shelter shown on p. 33. This composition in red and white transmits, like the paintings on the last two pages, a feeling of calm and tranquillity. Note the position of the bow outside the hut to the right of the entrance, which is closed by a door of straw matting (?), exactly like the huts used by the Peuls today.

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SEFAR

The positions of these two sitting figures are found in most of the paintings in this style.

SEFAR (pp. 125 and 126)

JABBAREN (p. 127)

Each of the three figures is related by its pose to the figures with the herds. The recurrence of this pose suggests that it may have been a specific symbol, perhaps religious.

INAOUANRHAT (pp. 128 and 129, in colour)

This is one of the most enigmatic paintings in the Tassili. The only clearly discernible thing is the circle in the middle representing a hut in which, exceptionally enough, two people are sitting. One has no idea what the other shapes represent; one might imagine them to be moving around an axis. Any theory of their meaning would be arbitrary. The central round spots are found in many other paintings, and their symbolic character seems certain.

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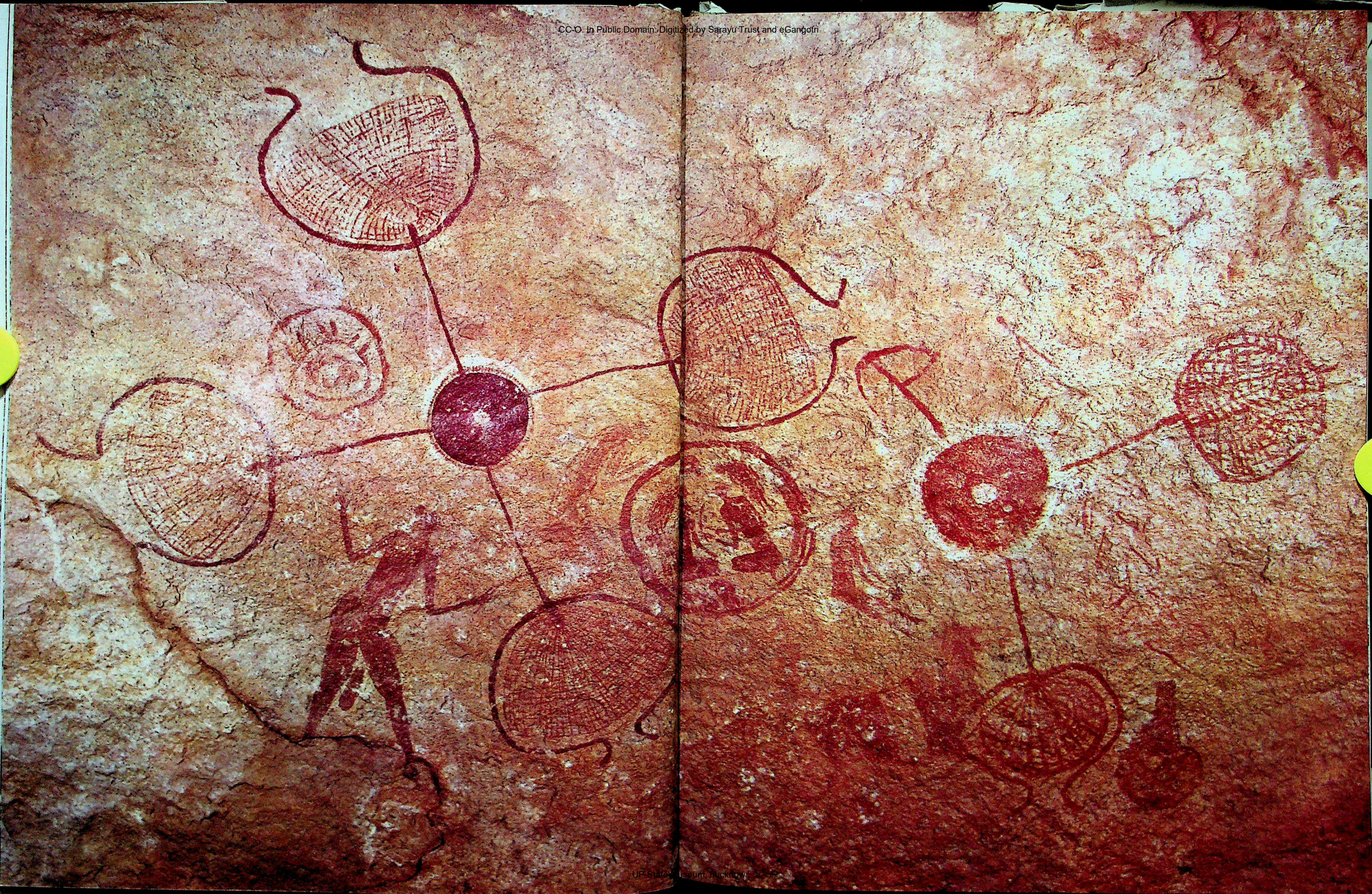

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SEFAR

This painting of the cattle herders is one of the most expressive. The artist has cleverly taken advantage of the irregularities in the rock, which thus become plastic features of the composition and acquire the same value as the pictorial elements. All the motifs occurring in the paintings of this period are assembled here in a large group measuring about 5 m. in width; we can see huts, a couple seated face to face above, on the right a figure in the classical position of the 'guardian' of the herds, and, curiously enough, the objects which are usually seen inside the huts are painted here in two hollows in the rock, as though trying to shelter them.

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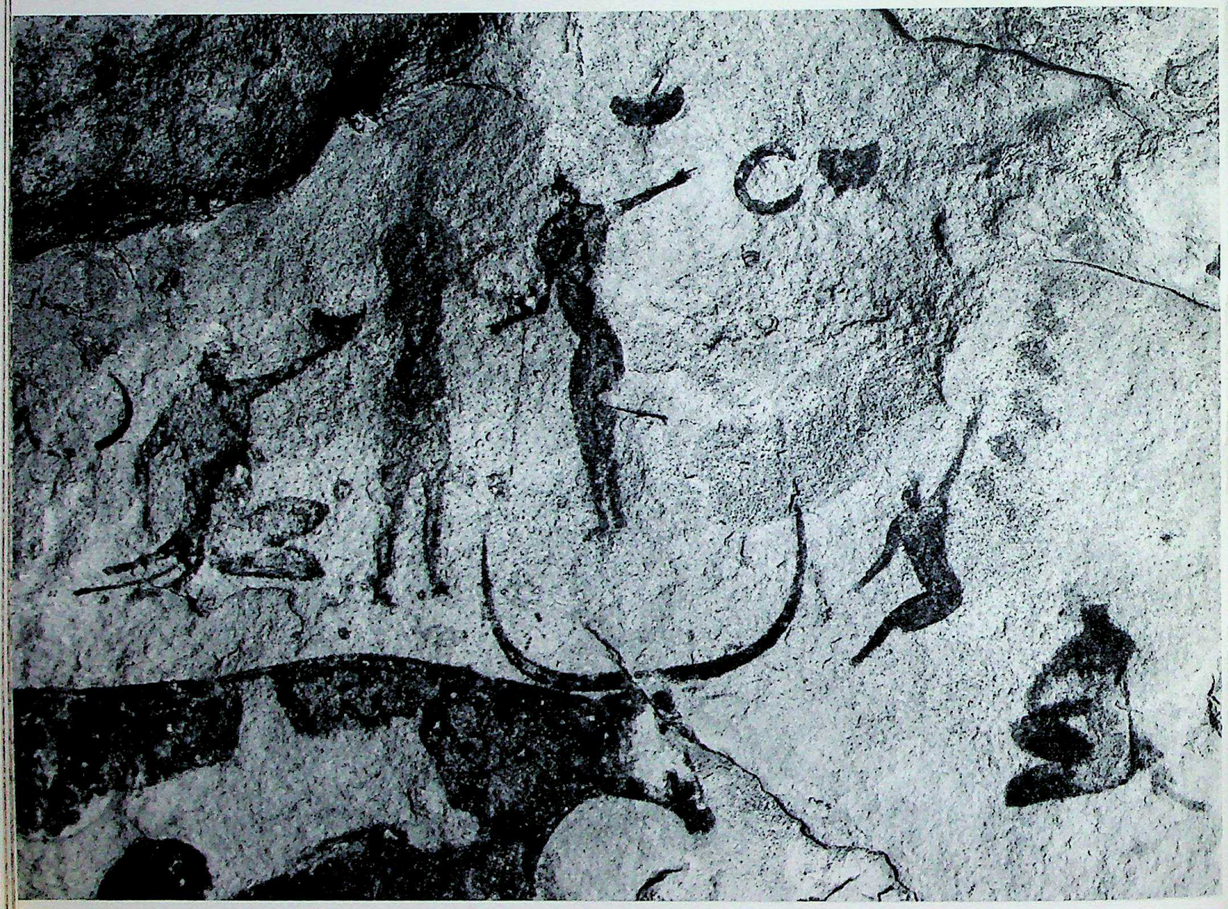

TITÉRAS N'ÉLIAS

New attitudes appear in this painting. On the left a squatting figure offers a pottery vessel to another figure who turns his head towards him. The gestures of all these people, except of the one sitting in a hieratic attitude on the right, point in the same direction, as if indicating some distant object. The meaning of this scene, like that of many others, escapes us entirely.

OZANÉARÉ

This beautifully composed scene shows, as is common on the Tassili, adults and children. Perhaps it is a family scene near a [illegible]

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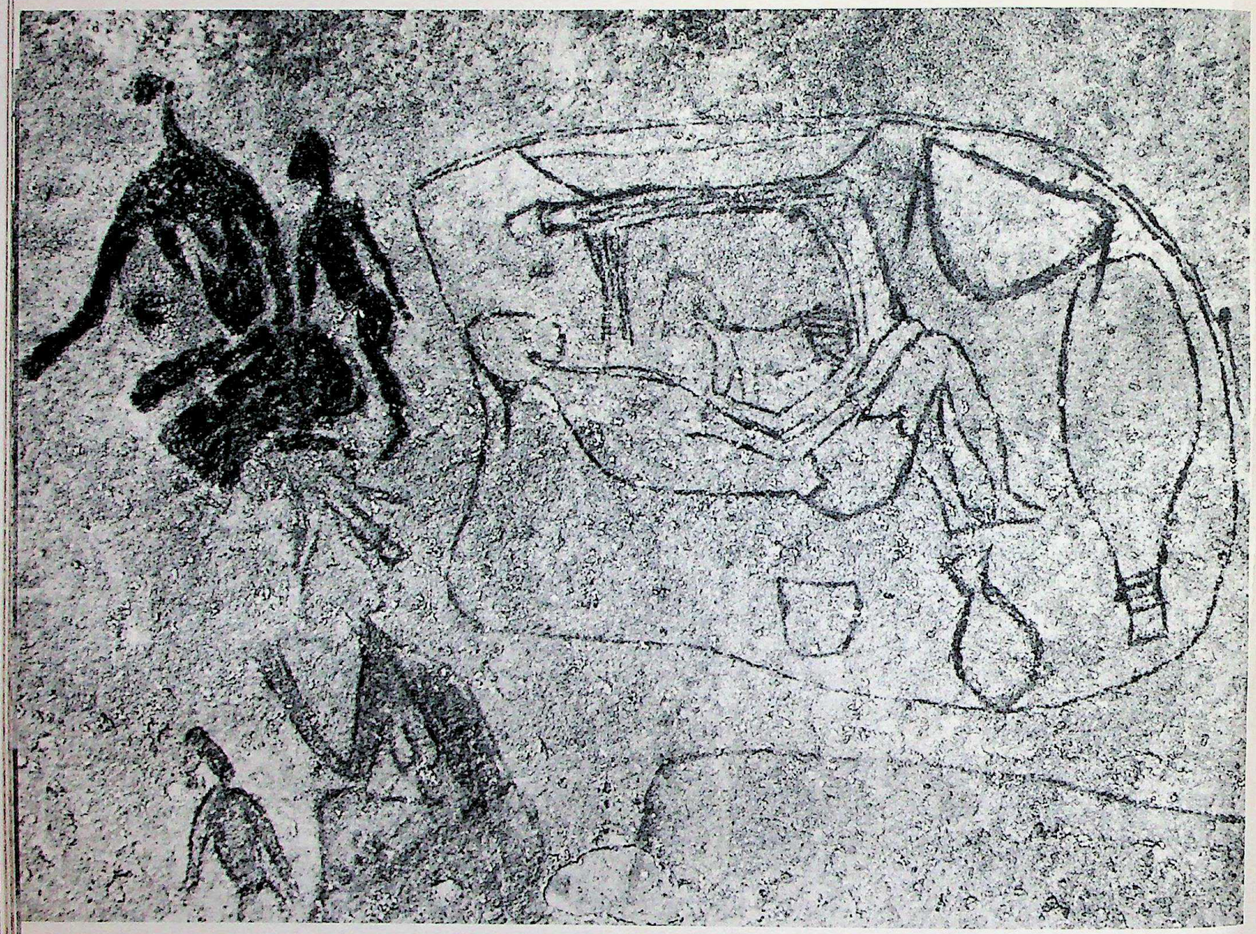

SEFAR

Scene with children. This painting, of more recent age although belonging to the same group as those following, shows a curious style of perspective. The hut, in which two persons and a number of objects are represented, is shown in plan while the man lying down, the child and the utensils are shown in profile. Here there is an obvious connection with Egyptian painting.

OZANÉARÉ

Mother and child.

OZANÉARÉ (pp. 136 and 137, in colour)

Ozanéaré, which has very few pictures from the archaic period, is one of the richest in anthropomorphic representations. In this rocky massif are found paintings of cattle herders which may be reckoned among the finest of all the paintings on the Tassili plateau.

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JABBAREN

In the following pages we have paintings which suggest festivals, parades, or processions. The first processional group, shown opposite, has already been published in a scientific work sponsored by the Institute of Saharan Research of Algiers University. It appeared in the form of a drawing based on the notebooks of Captain Brenans, whose sketch in question dates from 1938. Here is an extract from the caption: 'Panel representing the sale of a woman to strangers: it is "Josephine". [This 'Josephine' is reproduced here on page 127.] Her sisters, who are completely naked, hold one another by the hand to muster their courage. The one who receives "the price of a basket of cowrie shells" averts her face as though ashamed of their act... Josephine visibly resists the ravisher, who drags her away by the wrist. This is one of the most curious scenes of this place:.. There was probably, at an evolved stage of the bovidians, a traffic of women in both senses.' We would prefer personally to avoid adopting so fantastic an interpretation.

JABBAREN (pp. 140 and 141, in colour)

Careful examination of the paintings of the Tassili can furnish information about the dress, hair-style and weapons of the ancient populations of this land. We have already noticed that the sex of animals is generally shown – bulls here, cows or heifers there – while the human figures of the period are almost entirely asexual. We cannot tell whether we are in the presence of men or women; the only indication that can help us is the trunk, where pear-shaped breasts can sometimes be seen. For example, this painting from Jabbaren suggests dancing girls, but almost certainly they are men.

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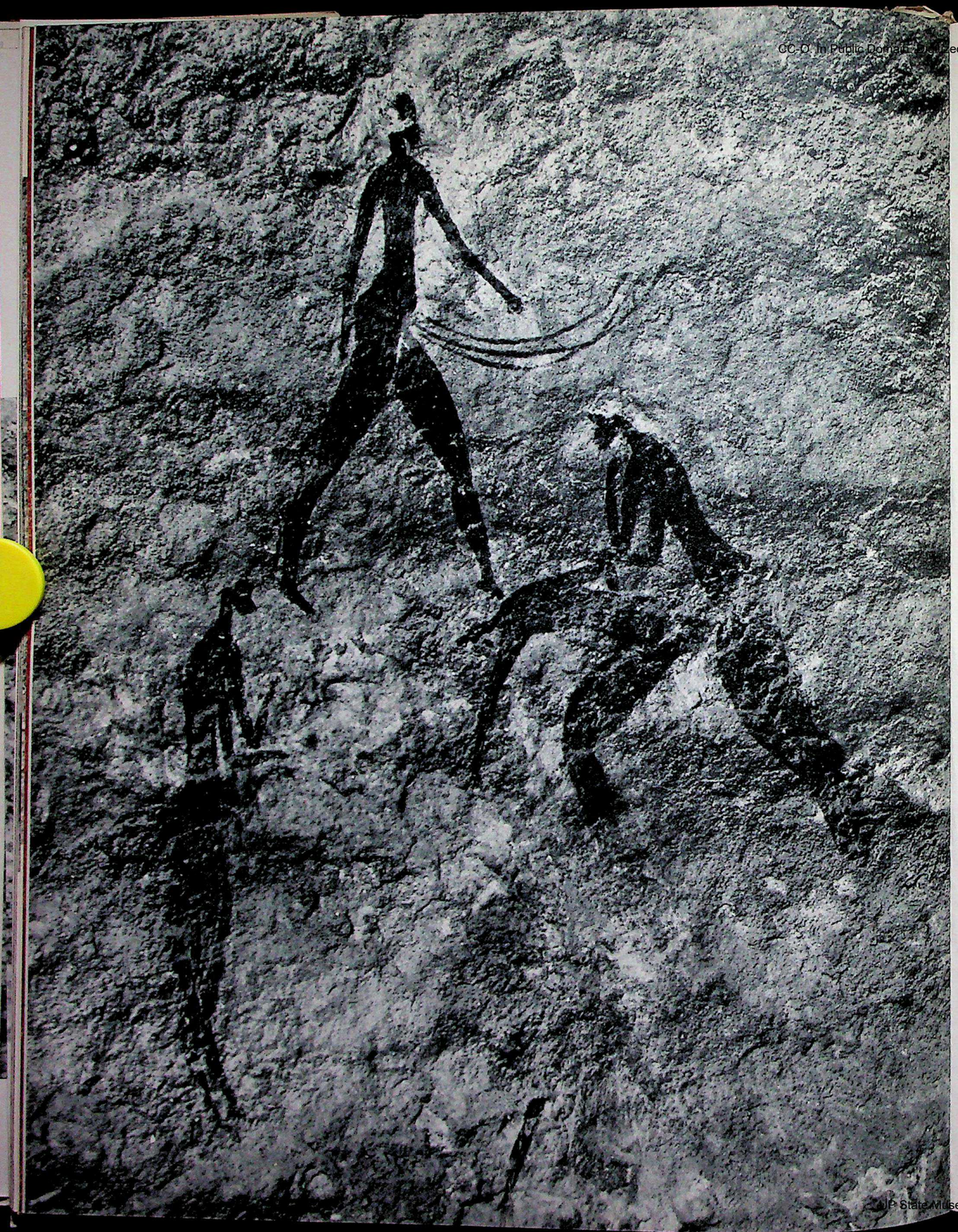

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◂ OZANÉARÉ
The meaning of this scene is obscure.

The world of Tassili comes to life in the pictures that follow. Despite their apparent realism, very few of these scenes are really comprehensible to us. Here and there we find a figure with arms outstretched offering a pottery container to another person standing near him (p. 132). Elsewhere, as for example on page 153, we may fancy we see a procession. Certain attitudes recur in the paintings on pages 138, 140, 151, and 153; in each of them a man or a woman gracefully turns his or her head backwards. Quite often, some of the figures are shown in odd postures.

This brings us to the end of the observations that can justifiably be made on these ancient paintings. However, if we turn to the literature which has, up to now, dealt with the rock art of Tassili and indeed with rock art generally, we find a number of interpretations which, though they may cause us amusement, constitute the chief and only information at our disposal.

Says one such source: 'The white dots which cover the entire body are certainly not decorative. It is more probable that they are the marks of some malady such as smallpox.'

An alleged 'scene of accusation' is described thus: 'Above, five persons in line. The jaunty defendant on the left with his hand on his hip, faces the plaintiffs who accuse him in chorus by word and gesture.

'"Of what?"

'"You were seen in an attitude of great intimacy with a certain woman who was not pleased at being caught redhanded and accordingly bowed her head."'

We could quote many other similar examples of extravagant interpretation attributable to certain prehistorians, including the most eminent. We have been careful in this work not to venture on such dangerous ground.

Primitive man is much more simple than we are. For him the perpetuation of the race is a phenomenon as natural as day and night, and when the Tassilian wished to paint a scene of coitus, he did so in the same spirit as his other paintings. We may note that this type of representation is rare among the works of the naturalistic school. Men are usually asexual, unlike the animals, whose sex is usually indicated. There are, however, some paintings of inferior quality showing men and women in attitudes which nowadays would be judged obscene.

N.B. The paintings reproduced in this chapter are between 0.15 m. and 0.35 m. in height.

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◂ SEFAR (pp. 144 to 147) ▸

One of the paintings in which the creative genius of the artists of the Tassili shows to best effect. It is amazing to find such mastery, of composition as well as of drawing, such power combined with such grace. This painting was executed about five thousand years ago. The details reproduced to the same size as the original on pp. 144, 145, and 147, are from the group shown on p. 146.

SEFAR (p. 148) ▸▸

Walking figures are common among the paintings of the Tassili. In many cases the man walks in front, bow in hand, seeming to lead the woman.

TIN ABOTÉKA (p. 149) ▸▸

A painting in recent style. The strange head-gear of the figure is often found on the rocks of the Tassili. Dogs, however, are rare.

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OZANÉARÉ

This painting, displaying perfect balance and nobility, equals in beauty, composition and execution that reproduced on p. 147.

JABBAREN

Group of little figures most of whom wear round head-gear.

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TIN TAZARIFT

The highly individual style of these figures makes the chronological classification of the painting difficult. One cannot be sure whether it belongs to an older or a younger epoch than the cattle herders. Note, above, an antelope lying on its back, and, between the two seated figures on the upper left, a shape related to the symbols of the painting on p. 53.

OZANÉARÉ (pp. 154 and 155)

A group of men armed with bows and arrows. The leading figure points forward in the usual attitude which we have noticed.

SEFAR (p. 156)

The object brandished by the figure, shown here in natural size, is probably a stone axe.

SEFAR (p. 157)

This running figure holds an unidentifiable object in its hand.

JABBAREN

These figures, in ample loincloths and with caps on their heads, are apparently carrying pottery vessels.

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9 THE BOWMEN

The magnificent school of paintings having cattle as its dominant theme has just revealed some of its masterpieces to us.

The diversity of subject and scene shows a perfect mastery of the pictorial representation of movement, a movement which is interpreted, transposed, given rhythm, with a bold inventiveness which would astound the painters of today. To this important collection will now be added the last chapter concerned with the naturalistic style. It brings together a series of archers, almost as common a motif in the rock art of this epoch as the ox itself. Intentionally, it has only rarely appeared in the earlier pictures. It demands a chapter to itself where it should be possible, by deliberate arrangement, to relate the stylistic tendencies found in all of these paintings.

The bowman is representation expressed in the most startling attitudes. The man seems no longer subject to the law of gravity; he runs, leaps, even flies, brandishing his arrows or his bow, howling with terror or shouting with joy. The outline changes subtly to suggest speed, litheness, or anticipation. At last, his bow strung and his attitude settled, the archer faces an adversary, who is often invisible, although pages 164-165 show us a remarkable battle where the groups are seen face to face.

What can we say about the strange figure from Jabbaren (p. 169), painted at the end of a steep passage ending in an impasse, who, completely alone on a little smooth patch of the cliff, seems to call upon some invisible force? The bowman brandishing his weapon generally accompanies illustrations of groups of people and cattle on the march. When he walks in front of a woman, he holds his arm in a normal manner (p. 170). He bends down and straightens up in certain paintings which may represent ritual scenes (pp. 145, 158). Finally, in rural scenes where animals and men are at peace, the bow is laid down beside the hut, to the right of the entrance (pp. 121-123).

Thus the bow appears as an essential accessory, an arm possessed by every man of the community, perhaps indeed the badge of a 'man' in the sense of the prestige with which this term is imbued among the primitive populations.

◀ OZANÉARÉ

The postures of these bowmen will be found again in the illustrations which follow. The man on the right holds out his bow while running and looking backwards over his left shoulder.

N.B. The paintings reproduced between pages 158 and 169 are between 0.15 m. and 0.35 m. in height. The figure on page 170 is 1.80 m. and that on page 172 is 1.50 m. in height.

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JABBAREN (pp. 160 and 161)

In the centre of this picture can be seen a herd, to all appearances peaceable. The archers adopt strange attitudes. Some seem to be performing dance movements or even acrobatics, like those on the lower right doing the splits while leaping in the air. The three bowmen in front of them are standing in the classic attitude of the archer shooting.

SEFAR
(pp. 162 and 163, in colour) ▸

The legs of these running archers are inordinately far apart. Distortions like this found in the Tassili rock paintings were certainly intentional, in order to accentuate the rhythm of the composition (cf. the archers found in the caves of Téruel, which are strikingly similar).

SEFAR (pp. 164, 165 and 166) ▸

Here perhaps we have a pitched battle. We say 'perhaps' for in fact there are no wounded or dead lying on the ground. The many fallen arrows lie at some distance from the combatants, and we can see one of the latter, upper right, apparently brandishing an axe a great distance away from the enemy. But whatever is represented, the subject itself gave the artist a pretext for creating a dynamic composition of magnificent scope and balance. Once again, the texture and colour of the rock have been used to advantage, and here again the legs of most of the archers are excessively far apart. A detail is shown on p. 166 (one of the archers on the upper left) enlarged to twice its original size. The painting gives a feeling of vast size although it is only 1.43 m. wide.

TIN TAZARIFT (p. 167) ▸

Much less flexibly drawn than the previous pictures, this bowman wears his arrows attached to his belt, like the archers on p. 160.

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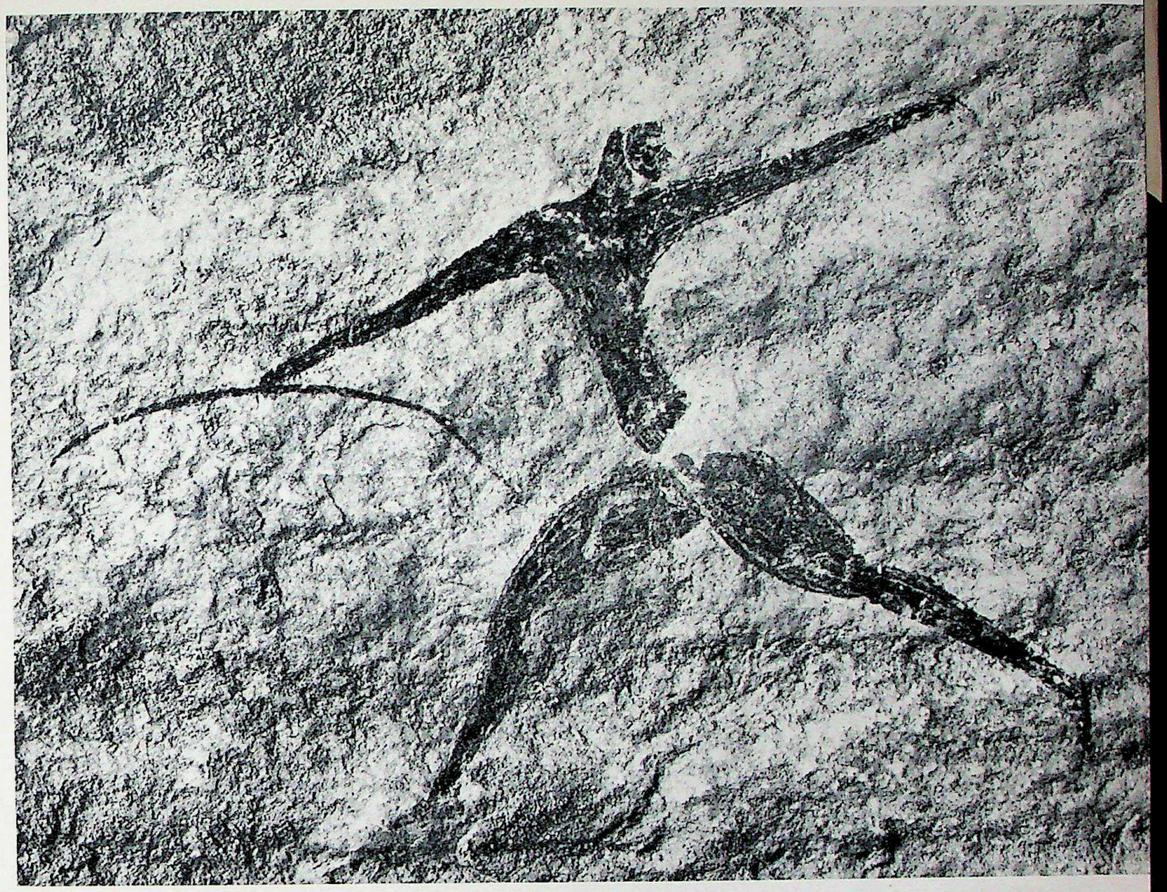
SEFAR

An archer from the same group as those on pp. 162-163 (reproduced to the same size as the original) decorating the sides of a narrow passage. Note the bracelets and the white feathering of the arrows.



JABBAREN

This archer, drawn with an extraordinary freedom – the slender trunk is joined to the legs by the loincloth, which uses the natural colour of the stone, and the face, which is separated from the neck by a white line, looks like a mask – is on the wall of a shelter in a passage ending in an impasse. With his left arm stretched out of all proportion to exaggerate his impetus, he seems to be performing some dance movement. The painting here equals that of the finest Greek vases.

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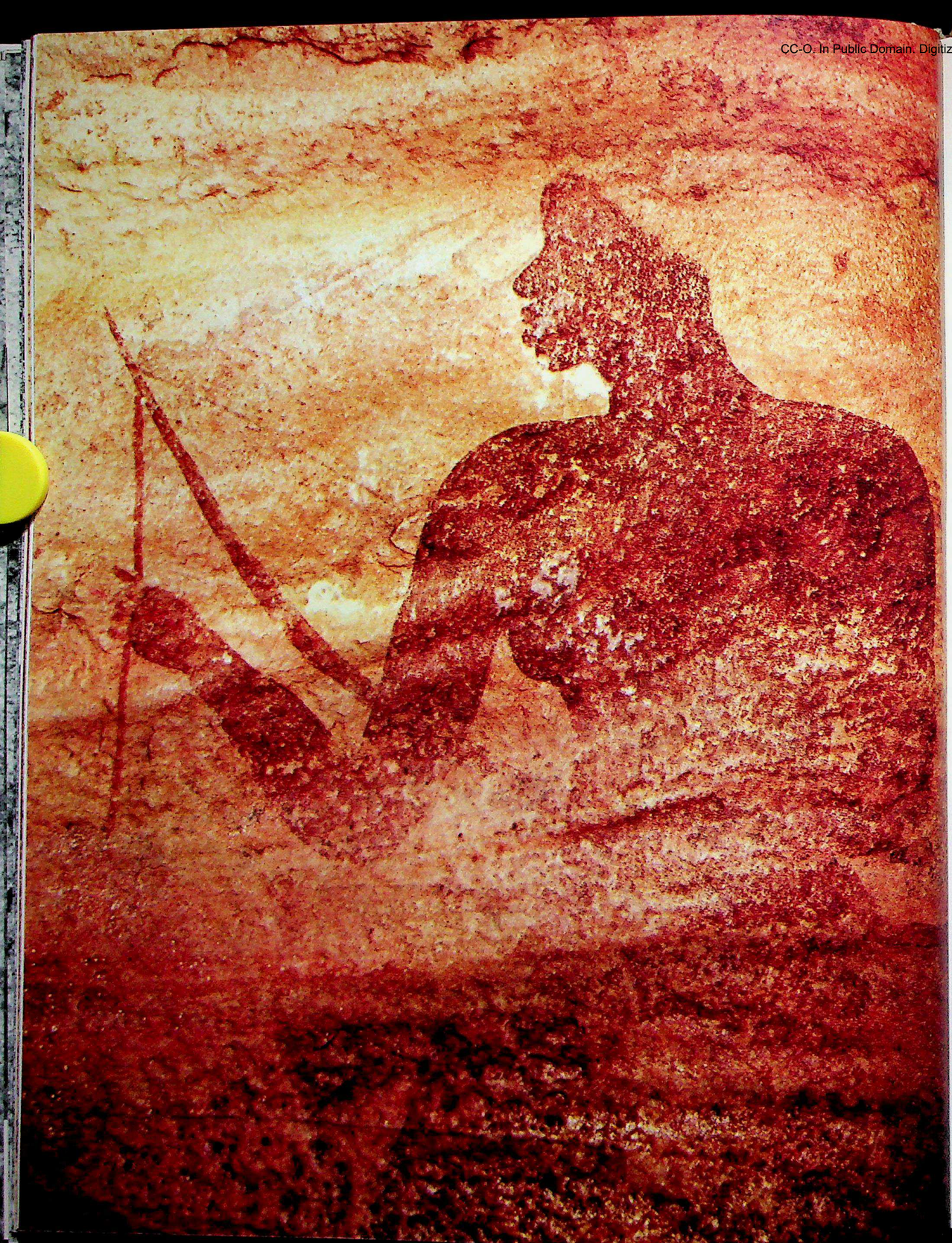

TADJÉLAMINE

These two zebra-striped figures – reproduced to the same size as the original, painted in a shelter where there appear also an outlined elephant and a herd of white cows – are characteristic of the style intermediate between the naturalistic and that of the latest period.

◀ TIN ABOTÉKA

This noble archer is exceptionally large, measuring 1.80 m. The large paintings in this style seem to be confined to certain sites. Apart from Tin Abotéka, one finds examples at Tissoukal (a huge bovid 3 m. long) and at Sefar (a seated couple, larger than life).

seum, Lucknow

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The appearance of the horse in the cliff pictures continued with a profound modification in the forms of the cliff figures and the birth of a new style of painting – a style which, in the avoidance of the unnecessary, the search for simplicity, was to leave us some of the most remarkable works of Tassili. Sometimes we are concerned only with an isolated picture in a massif of crumbling rocks, near a camel track (p. 180). Was it climatic influences which made themselves felt in the pictorial creations? Perhaps so. Gradually, in time with the drying-up of the Sahara, painting evolved in the direction of a schematization of the painted figure, i.e. in the direction of writing.

In the course of this evolution, which is most clearly seen in the treatment of human beings, the forms of the naturalistic-style paintings became progressively more refined. At one point the artist used no more than a simple line to delineate his subject. A delicate line, as in a pen drawing, first appeared in the drawings of the horns of the cattle, tapering, harmoniously curved horns borne sometimes by animals whose form is not altogether pleasing. Then, as its use became more prevalent, the artist drew the ox itself in outline, and other animals the same way. At last, as the evolution continued, it was the turn of the human figure to receive the same treatment. This became the distinguishing characteristic of a new school. Two styles crystallized. The one adopted the figures of the preceding period and described them minutely. The drawing indicated the hair, the eyes, the eyelashes and pupils, the nose, the mouth, necklaces, hair styles, and so on, the hands with their fingers, while the figures themselves acquired curious zebra stripes which, following a new development, alone remained visible, before disappearing in their turn as victims of a stylistic upheaval.

A second form of expression continued right up to the beginning of the Islamic period. These pictures, it may be added, are done in the manner of cubist paintings (p. 179, face of the figure in the lower centre); the head is broken up into three zones – the skull, the face, and the neck – between each of which there is space. A large number of representations of this kind decorate the rocks of Tassili but are often in a state of poor preservation. The next stage of the evolution is characterized in the human figures by the absence of the head and the representation of the body by two triangles, one above the other. The bi-triangular man (or ‘ diabolo ’) sees the light of day. There are few masterpieces of this period, for schematization takes possession of the

◀ JABBAREN

This archer is the last of our series in the naturalistic style. This bearded figure with long hair – we know few similar – is found beside a large masked animal. The remainder of the shelter is decorated with paintings in the archaic style, notably those shown on pp. 56 and 57.

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◀ TADJÉLAMINE

This finely-drawn arm appears in isolation. The elegant hand opens like a flower. The draughtsmanship is an example of the period which succeeded that of the naturalistic style.

SEFAR ▶

Humour is frequent in Tassilian cliff art, as in this caricatured figure.

SEFAR (pp. 176 and 177) ▶▶

This painting is very representative of Tassilian art. The naturalistic period is over. From now on drawing grows more and more abstract, even geometric, becoming in the end no more than a sign. Note the tapered limbs and the three figures without heads; these were to become characteristic of the new style.

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figures. It may happen all the same that the Tassili, which still hides thousands of paintings of all periods, will reveal to us in the future a great bi-triangular period. Bi-triangular figures are always accompanied by cattle with geometrically marked hides.

Finally, the horse, of which a glimpse has been caught now and again in the preceding pictures, appears in number among the herds. There are vehicles drawn by animals already too schematic for it to be seen whether they are in fact horses. The human beings riding these precarious carriages are no more than shadows of themselves. A schematic art succeeds the cliff painting that had vanished.

N.B. The paintings reproduced in this chapter are between 0.10 m. and 0.35 m. in height.

TADJÉLAMINE ▶

The region surrounding the oasis of Ihérir is a part of the Tassili where the boldest paintings known in rock art are assembled. These paintings are of fairly recent age, contemporary with the appearance of the horse. Note the strange costume of these figures, who are seemingly performing some ritual dance.

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◀ TADJÉLAMINE

Tadjélamine is situated on an immense reg from which rise here and there hillocks covered with decaying rocks. It is on the bases of these rocks that the paintings are found. One of these sites has a large shelter at its centre, in which only two figures have been painted. One of them is reproduced here. We are far removed from the naturalistic style. The figure is drawn entirely in separate lines, whose various directions indicate the shape.

TADJÉLAMINE ▶
(pp. 181 and 183)

Here on the facing page is a detail of the painting on p. 183 (in colour), showing a number of subjects painted in different styles but surely the work of a single artist. The most extraordinary of the figures is that shown on p. 181, executed in the same style as the figure on the preceding page, but even more skilfully. The figure is delineated solely by carefully placed patches of paint, which give not only the form and volume, but also the movement.

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◀ SEFAR

These two figures suggest acrobats and clowns.

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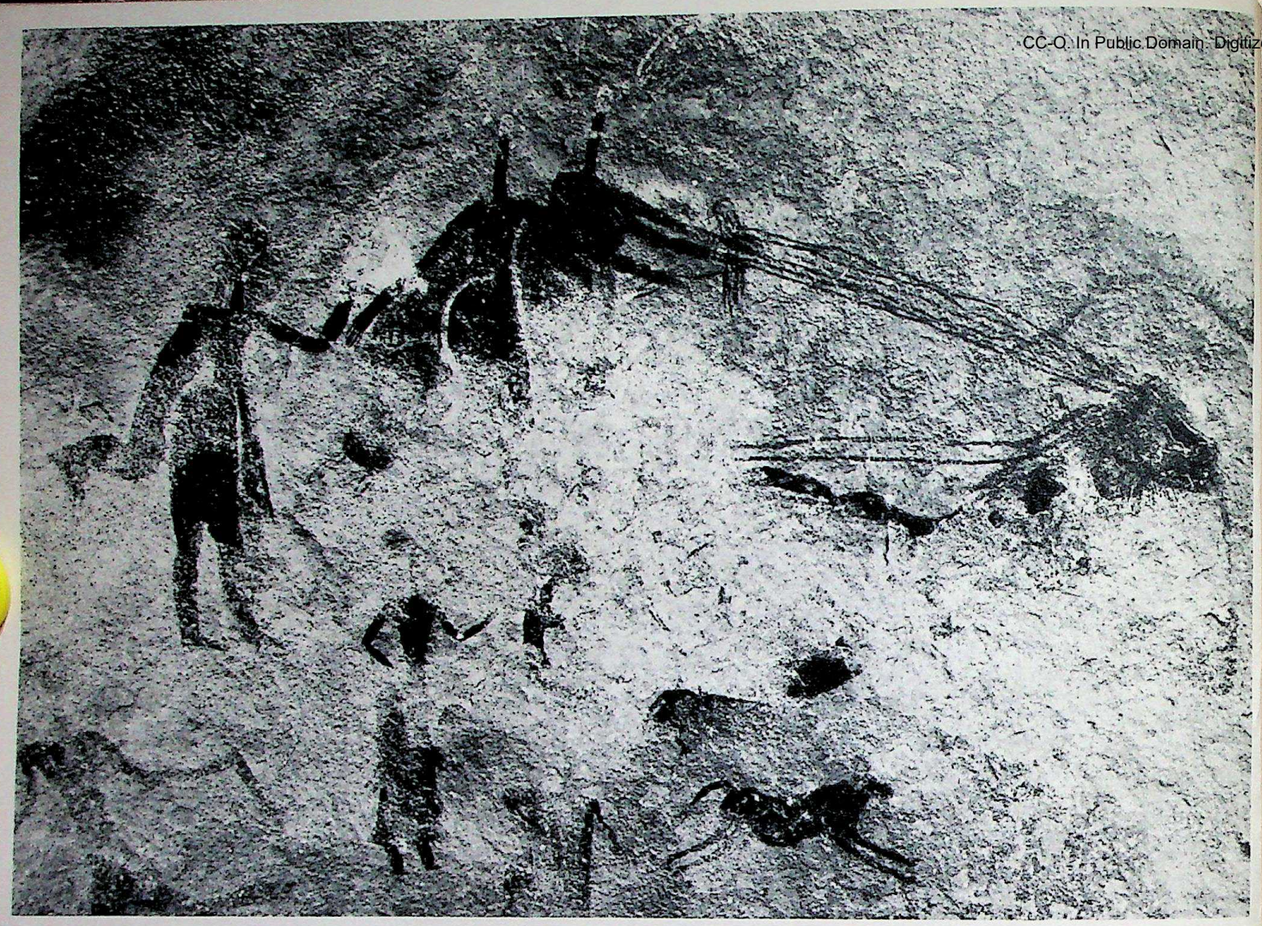

TIN ABOTÉKA

The chariot drawn by galloping horses – the so-called 'flying gallop' – from now on will frequently be found among the Tassilian paintings. Such scenes usher in the decline of rock painting. In the following pages we have reproduced some particularly characteristic works in this style, which gradually came closer to pure geometrism.

11 THE LAST AGE OF THE PAINTINGS

The Sahara had become a desert. Only the great rivers still periodically brought the water down from the mountains. Every day the population diminished, decimated by drought. Cattle are no longer illustrated on the cliffs except in small number. Animals like the moufflon and the giraffe still appear here and there, as do dogs and horses. But all these representations have lost their former verve. After the appearance of the astounding bi-triangular figures, represented without heads and armed with lances, rock art itself seems to dry up. On the level of material culture, is not the lance itself another sign of stagnation, if not retrogression? The absence of the bow, more powerful than the javelin, is perhaps due directly to the disappearance of the raw materials needed to make it.

There is one sign of progress. The wheel is known to these peoples. The wheel or, to be more precise, the vehicle drawn by an animal, is found at many places on the Tassili. Various hypotheses suggest it came from Egypt, or from Rome, ridden by valiant conquerors in search of colonies. Examination of these figures readily furnishes several indications which make this difficult to accept.

First of all, even a very rapid study shows us an extremely unstable vehicle with the driver balancing on the axle. This position is inevitably precarious and rules out the possibility of a long journey. Then there is the terrain; the thought of a galloping chariot flying along the tracks of Tassili is inconceivable!

Finally, what possible motive could have induced the inhabitants of Tassili to decorate the walls of their rocks with pictures of chariots bringing colonizing outsiders?

The truth may be simpler. Perhaps the chariot was used by the Tassilians themselves. The location of the chariot paintings near open spaces has led me to think of races to which the Tassilians may have been addicted.

Or perhaps the chariot was only the representation of a myth, imported together with the horse, and possibly corresponding to the chariot of Apollo. And here, no doubt, is the key to the enigma. If chariots, whatever their origin, have crossed the Tassili and the desert, it seems incredible that no trace of them has been found. If the chariot of Tassili is the representation of a myth, its presence among the illustrations of the Sahara, of the Oran Sud, and in the remotest corners of Tassili, would be explained.

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After the horse it was the camel which became the beast of burden; a beast whose constitution was adapted to the new climate.

In the ancient world the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, and others, employed writing; in the Sahara, the latest graffiti transformed themselves into ideograms. One left on the cliff some short message for men or for the gods. The scarcity of sources of food led at once to the scattering of these messages and to their concentration at known situations. What do these messages mean?

Perhaps when the ancient Tifinar alphabet has been deciphered it will be one of the most decisive steps toward the understanding of the rock art and the history of the neolithic populations of the Tassili n'Ajjer.

N.B. The paintings reproduced in this chapter are between 0.05 m. and 0.40 m. in height.

TADJÉLAMINE (above, and lower right)

We know from the preceding paintings that at the time they were executed pottery existed. The inhabitants of the Tassili employed querns and rubbing stones to grind their corn, and flint working (arrowheads, knives, scrapers) had reached its full development. Suddenly the wheel appeared. We rarely find it singly, as in the lower picture, but generally in pairs attached to the axle of a horse-drawn vehicle. Very few of these paintings have survived in a good state of preservation.

The detail of the chariot reproduced on the left has been shown by itself to indicate the position of the driver, standing on the pole and apparently balancing precariously. As we have already pointed out, it is difficult to imagine a chariot of this sort on a long journey. The vehicle reproduced at the top of p. 187 is unusual in that it is mounted on four wheels.

TITÉRAS N'ÉLIAS

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TADJÉLAMINE

The appearance of the dromedary coincided with the final phase of dessication of this land. The survival of the inhabitants depended on this animal. We still find the ancient populations on the Tassili and Hoggar in the form of the Touaregs.

OUAN BENDER

The dromedary is the final witness of an era that neared its close.

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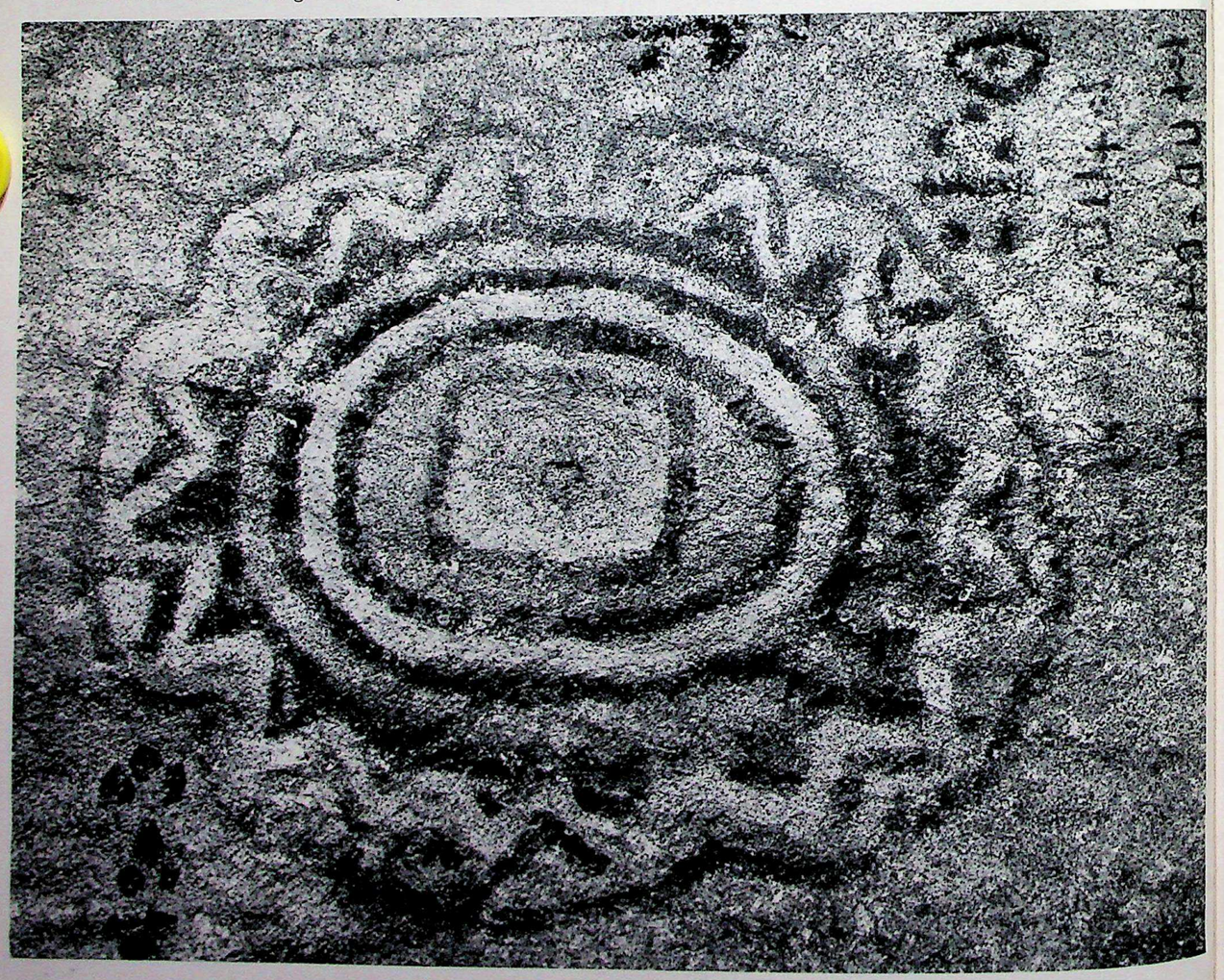
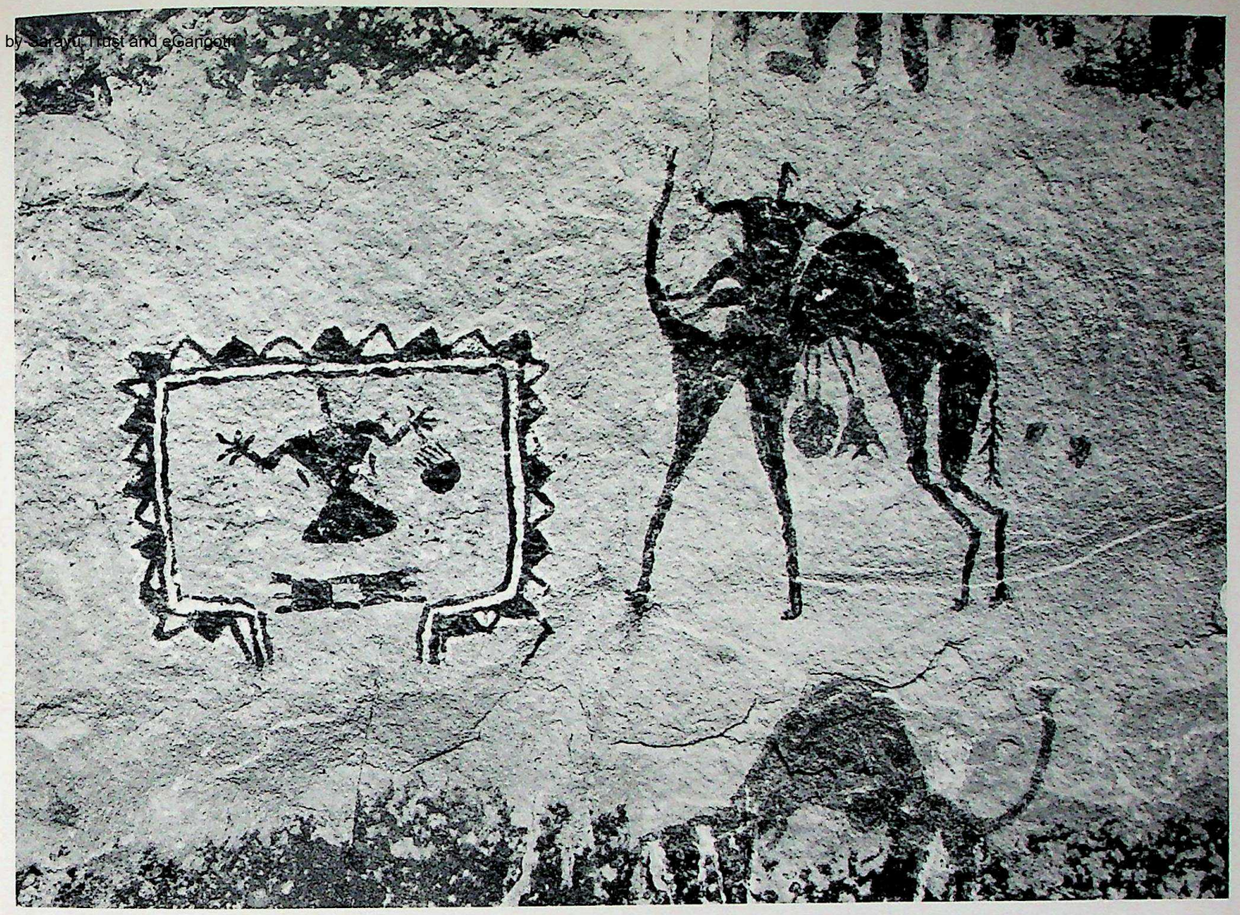
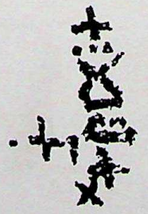
TISSOUKAL

A characteristic work of the geometric style.







OUAN BENDER

The hut is related to the painting on the preceding page. The figure seated inside is shown by two triangles. Here we reach the progressive transformation of the drawing, soon to become the sign or written letter.

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◀ JABBAREN

Detail from a group related to the two last illustrations. Note the two triangles joined at their corners which certainly derived from an earlier human representation and have become symbols which are still unexplained.
In similar but inferior paintings at the site of Inaouanrhat, some writers have tried to see reed boats used for hunting hippopotami. Such an interpretation seems to us without foundation.

OUAN MELLEN

Each of these three figures shown by two triangles also have two triangles on their chests.

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SUTRA

This painting clearly reveals the evolution of the human form as it approaches the written character.

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TIN ABOTÉKA

The art of rock painting is about to vanish. This picture shows one of its last manifestations.

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TISSOUKAL

The letters of the Tifinar alphabet – which is still undeciphered – are partially adopted by present-day Tifinars and are the only signs which link modern Tassili with the world of shapes known to the neolithic Tassilian population.

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CONCLUSIONS

The pictures which we have just seen represent only an infinitesimal fraction of the wealth of the cliff paintings of Tassili. They are, nevertheless, the most striking and the best preserved of the works inventorized so far. How many remain which are still unknown to us? A comparison of the extent of the aerial photographs which appear on pages 199 to 202 with the extent of the Tassili gives an idea of the territory which remains to be gone over and searched if one hopes to be sure of finding all of these paintings (hundreds of thousands, if not millions).

We have analyzed here all the various styles which the known region of the Tassili offers us. The known region has been explored from north to south and consequently may be considered as a faithful reflection of the remainder of the Tassili. The latter undoubtedly holds remarkable works, but they must necessarily relate to one or other of the groups presented here. An area with prehistoric Tassilian paintings is not a thing of disorder and caprice. Certain rules emerge from the collation of the various zones I was able to make during my six months in Tassili. I was able to compare, contrast and analyze the diverse elements which make up such an area.

This work has no pretention to be definitive. But it is a record of the rock paintings of Tassili n'Ajjer, which will perpetuate their image for posterity.

How much longer will these paintings be able to withstand the atmospheric conditions? The rise of tourism in this region could be disastrous for this original art. André Malraux recently sent an expedition to examine the possibilities of preserving these paintings, and experiments tried at Tissoukal augur favourably for the possibilities of preserving and protecting them.

Now, our glance should drop towards the soil. Considering the scope and quality of the artistic remains which it has already revealed to us, the Tassili ought soon to become a vast excavation site where we will be able to bring to light a civilization which sleeps beneath the stone.

It is tantalizing to sense all around a strange civilization, to touch it with one's finger when handling the stab-decorated potsherds which are littered over the scorched soil, crumbling soil, pulverized by the sun and swept by the wind, soil where one also finds arrowheads, knives of quartz or chert, scrapers, beads, querns, pounders, unknown implements in unimaginable numbers; where, lying on their sides with their knees bent up in front of their bodies, the buried Tassilians have waited, under the sand and stones, for

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thousands of years, for our curiosity, to show us whether they were of white or dark race, or if both races existed together.

Hence archaeological excavation is required. What would we know today about Egypt or Greece, Sumer or Assur without excavation?

Why continue to neglect Tassili, of which we know only the paintings? Through these paintings we begin to sense the laws of a totally unknown universe and the features of a strange civilization. Despite variations of quality, its aesthetic world asserts itself in varying styles, creating in the end one of the most prodigious monuments of all time – the rock paintings of the Tassili n'Ajjer.

These aerial photographs show the Tassilian plateau. The paintings are situated in areas of rock outcrop which are distinguished by the places they occur. The white areas are sand flats. The grey zones without salient detail are the regs. Most of the known paintings are found in the area of this rectangle. Despite the amount of research done in this area, not all the painted sites have yet been discovered.
Comparing this zone with the general map of the Tassili will reveal the vast area which has not yet been investigated.
This photograph, with its many painted sites and shelters, suggests that this now desolate region was once heavily populated. I found only six or seven Touareg families living there in June 1961.

Photographs by l'Institut géographique national

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TASSILI N'AJJER PLATEAU

EAST-NORTH-EAST OF DJANET

0 — 3 miles

Wadi Adjendjoum

OZANEARE

Wadi Illaouliten

Wadi Amazar

Rayaye

Aguelmane

Alanedoumen

Eratestest

Wadi Tabarakat

Tabarakat

REG

Inaouanrhat

1900 -

JABBAREN

Matalen-Amazar

N - AJJER

Akba Aroum

Wadi Tin Djedemin

SEFAR

Aguelmane

Tinrassoutin

1663 -

Tin-Kani

Tin Teferiest

Tin Tazarift

In Etouami

Wadi In Itinen

Tin Aboteka

In Itinen

In-Aleouen

Gara

Taharara

Chadras

Ouan-Bender

Titeras N-Elias

Timenzouzin

Techamet

1739 -

Tamrit

Wadi Tamrit

Abaraka

Aguelmane

Tafelalet

Tan Zoumaitak

REG

OF

CLIFFS

Akba Tafelalet

Tafelalet

3rd Akba

2nd Akba

1st Akba

1300 -

Canyon

1743 -

Canyon

1837 -

Canyon

TASSILI

Aroum

Wadi

1200 -

To Djanet

To Djanet

NORTH

Cypress

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TASSILI N' AJJER

0 30 60 miles

- Site with paintings
- Site with engravings
- Pass or Akba
- Inhabited oasis
- Oasis
- Landing strip served from Algiers
- Wadi
- Motor track
- Camel track

FORT DE POLIGNAC (Ilezi)
Wadi Souf Mellen
Aban Tenouar
In Tifinar
Assahor
Toukrimine
Abeïor
Nafeg
Wadi Tadjeradjeri
Wadi Djorat
FADNOUN
Imrihou
Wadi Iherir
IHERIR
Tadjelamine
Ihreri
Wadi Ihreri
Timaksiouine
Dider
Sutra
Akba Tin Taradjeli
Tiror
Tin Bada
Techekalaouen
Quan Mellen
Tissoukal
Talouahouat
Idôo
Akba Assakao
Tin Kededoumatine
Tin Akatafa
Tin Tekelt
Abaraka Tafelalet
Tin Bedjedj
Ouan Bender
Tin Tazarift
Tan Zoumaitak
Sefar
Tamrit
Akba Tafelalet
Azelouaz
DJANET
Ozaneare
Akba Aroum
Jabbaren
Eferi
Inaouanrhat
Tin Krelifat
Wadi Amazar
Akba Adjefane
Terarart
Amiok
Akba Abd-en-Fok
Adjiri
To Ehzane
Tamanrasset
ZAOUATALAZ (Fort-Gardel)
Amguid - Fort-Flatters
ADMER
PLAIN
ADMER
ERG
WADI TAFASASET
LIBYA
RHAT
25°
26°
9°
10°

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SEFAR SITE

0 500 yds

Wadi Tin Djedemin
TIN TEFERIEST
55 83
100
61
102 130
48
158 159 164
126 127
121 172 173
34 35 45
50 56 58
31 60
82 171
49
Aguelmane
57
59 60
Aguelmane
Aguelmane
76 78 79 88 89
29 75 97
118 119 152
72
160 161 162
65
178
111
92 116 122
107 108 109
120 140 141
142 143 144 153
Initinen
Wadi
NORTH
Wadi Tinassoutin

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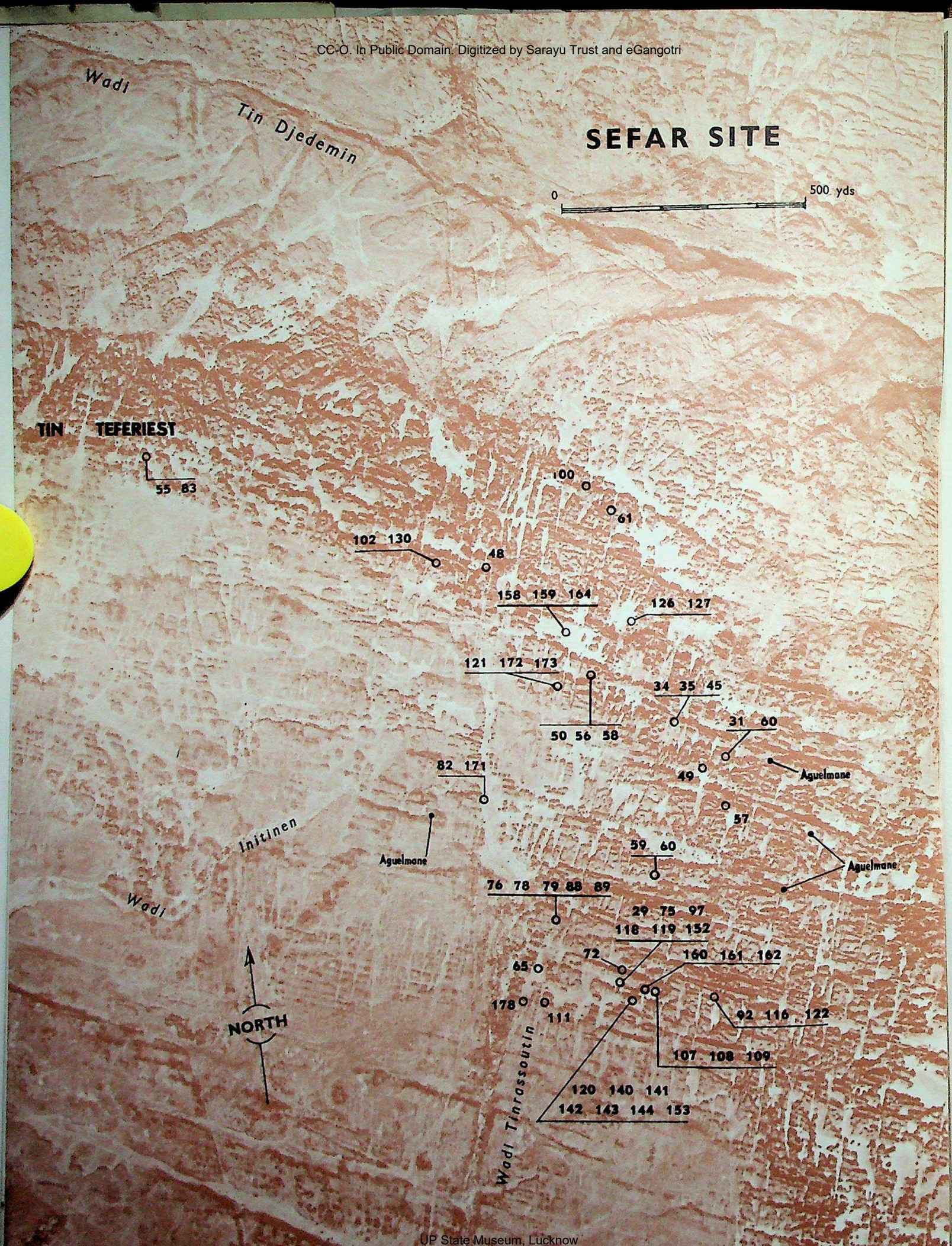

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TÉCHÉKALAOUEN

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TÉRARART

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TIN ABOTÉKA

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TIN TEFERIEST

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TITÉRAS N'ÉLIAS

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LES ROCHES PEINTES DU TASSILI N'AJJER

H. Breuil and H. Lhote

Arts et Métiers Graphiques, Paris 1958

pp. 138 'Panel representing the sale...'

143 'Scene of accusation...'

A LA DECOUVERTE DES FRESQUES DU TASSILI

H. Lhote

Arthaud, Paris 1958

p. 143 'The white dots...'

The photograph on the front end-paper taken at Tin Tazarift shows a forest of stones in the Tassili. The back end-paper is a view from one of the highest points of Sefar.

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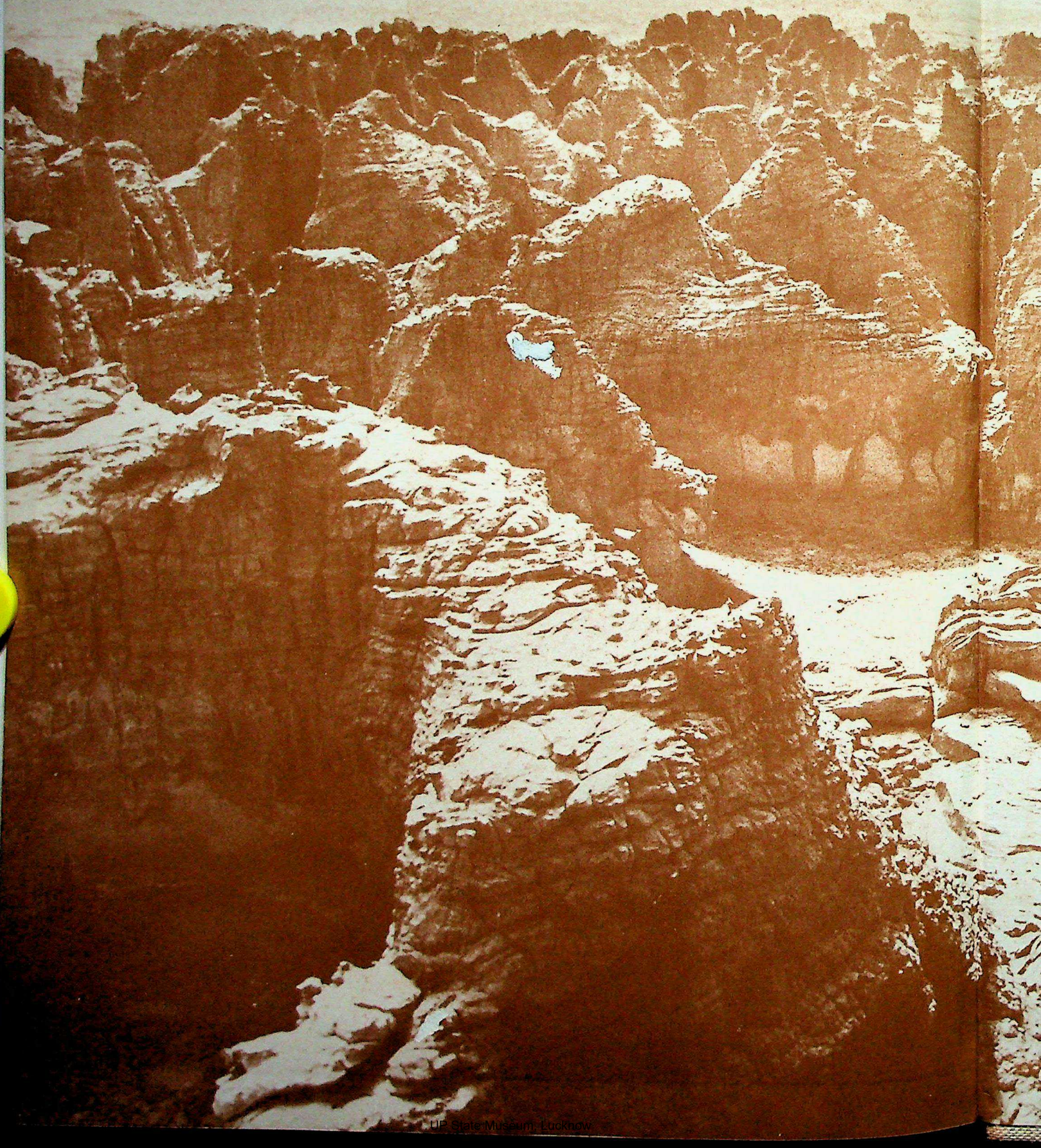

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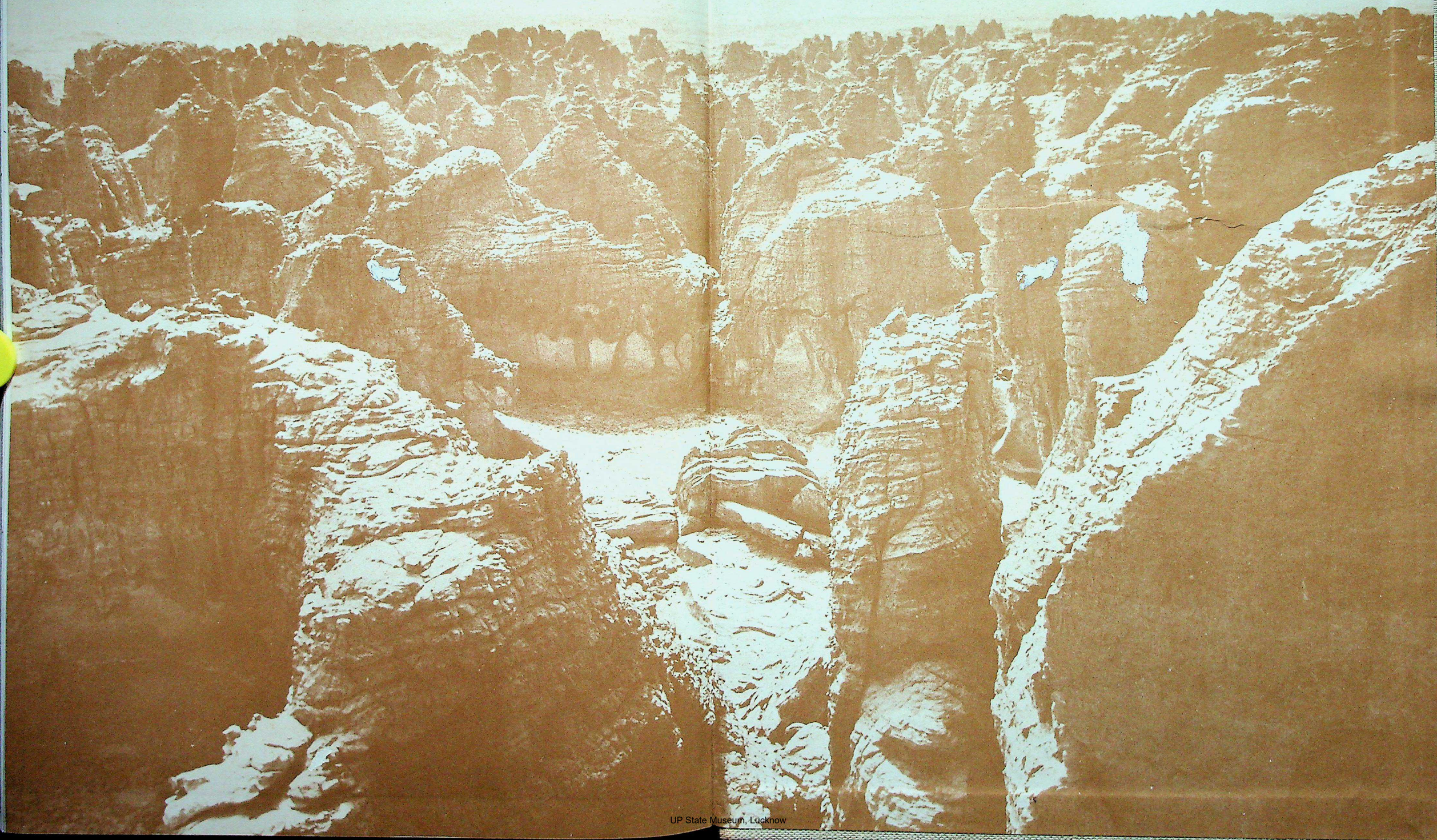

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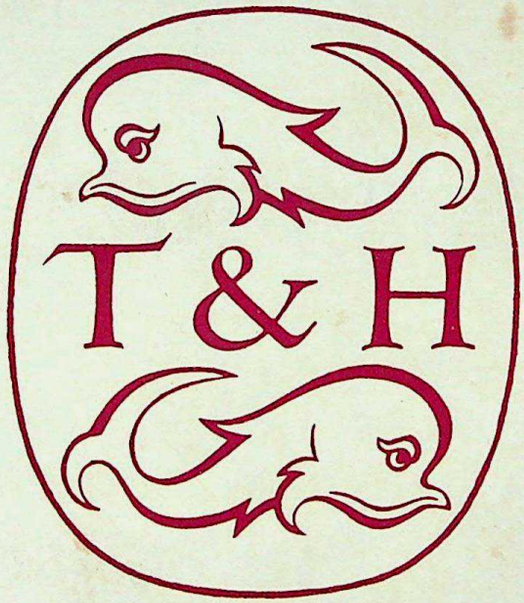

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